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Chapter 1

Fireheart looked back at the forest as he stood close to stepping stones, the scent of blood on his pelt. He shuddered in fear as he thought of what happened, but before he could even process what happened, Graystripe stepped next to him, carrying his kits, as well as Cloudpaw, who looked really worried and upset. The two friends and the apprentice looked at each other before preparing to jump. However, a call scared them. Mistyfoot, Stonefur, and Leopardfur had just crossing the border. "Mistyfoot, what are you doing?" Fireheart asked.

The blue-gray she-cat tilted her head and said, "We were planning on getting those kits. What happened to you?" Fireheart shook his head. There was no way he was going to tell them about what happened at the moment. "We'll explain it to you once we talk to Crookedstar." Leopardfur looked at the two cats suspiciously and asked, "Why would we help you?"

Graystripe put his kits down and said, "you owe us, remember? When we fed your Clan when you are starving?" Leopardfur hissed but grudgingly obliged with persistence of Mistyfoot and Stonefur. Mistyfoot grabbed the silver kit and Stonefur grabbed the dark gray kit before jumping onto the stepping stones. Fireheart and his accomplices followed suite.

Once on the other side of the river, the cats weaved through the reeds into RiverClan's camp. Leopardfur quickly ran into the leader's den ast the other cats waited. Fireheart felt awkward as a few RiverClan cats stared at him. A few moments passed and Crookedstar came out of his den, followed by his deputy. "Fireheart," called the leader, "come forward." Fireheart came forward on the leader's order. "Explain yourself."

Fireheart swallowed before saying, "Brokentail's rogues attacked ThunderClan's camp while most of our warriors were out on patrols. Me and Cloudpaw spotted them, but it was too late." Fireheart stopped. "Bluestar was already dead." Uneasiness went through the

camp.

Crookedstar raised his tail for silence before saying, "So why did you leave?" Fireheart shuffled his paws, "Graystripe feared for his kits' lives due to their half-clan and Graystripe wanted to stay with them. Tigerclaw never trusted me and hates the fact that me and my apprentice were once kittypets." Fireheart looked back at Graystripe. "You can chase me out but please, keep Graystripe and his kits in your Clan, for Silverstream's sake."

Emotion filled Crookedstar's eyes before saying, "Leopardfur, Stonefur, Blackclaw, Mudfur, let's discuss this." The called cats followed their leader into his den. A nose touched Fireheart's side. He turned and saw Graypool standing next to him, followed by Mistyfoot and Mosspelt, a Riverclan queen. "So, Fireheart," the elder said as Mistyfoot and Mosspelt walked over to Cloudpaw, Graystripe, and the helpless kits, "it's good to see you." The ginger warrior nodded in greeting before Crookedstar and his warriors left the warriors den. The leader said, "We have made up our minds. Graystripe and his kits will stay in RiverClan under supervision of Stonefur and Blackclaw. Fireheart and his apprentice will stay in camp for a the night. However, afterwards, you will be shone out of our territory towards the twolegplace. Whatever you decide next is up to you."

Fireheart bowed his head and said, "thank you, Crookedstar." The ginger tom turned to his apprentice. Cloudpaw looked up at his mentor and said, "that's it, huh? We're just giving up?" Fireheart sighed and said, "I'm sorry, Cloudpaw. I guess so. I tried to show you what a warrior, but I probably look like a coward."

Cloudpaw sighed, "I guess I'm just mad Tigerclaw would do such things. So what's the plan for us?" Fireheart looked at his apprentice and wondered that himself. "Well," the ginger warrior said, "we will visit your mother first to say we are alright." Cloudpaw nodded in agreement. "Now get some rest. Tomorrow will be a long day." Cloudpaw yawned and nodded as Stonefur padded up to the cats.

"Mosspelt is suckling the kits and Graystripe is trying to find a nest. Follow me to your nests for the night." The two former ThunderClan cats followed Stonefur. So much like Bluestar, Fireheart couldn't

help but think. The ginger tom wanted to tell the blue-gray tom the truth, but Fireheart saw Graypool at corner of his eye. Fireheart sighed as he saw his nest.

When Cloudpaw and Fireheart curled in their nests, Fireheart felt a tang of sadness. This may be his last day of a Clan warrior.

Chapter 2

"This way to the twolegplace." Stonefur guided Fireheart and Cloudpaw as they followed the river. Shadepelt and Mistyfoot followed. Cloudpaw had his head down as he constantly looking towards ThunderClan territory. As they made there way forward, Fireheart could just see the fence of a twoleg den in ThunderClan territory. Stonefur stopped, along with the others.

"This is where you cross." Stonefur said. Fireheart bowed his head and said, "thank you for all of your help, truly." Cloudpaw already put one paw in the water. As Stonefur and his patrol turned to leave, Fireheart urgently warned "be careful of Tigerclaw. He can be very unpredictable." The RiverClan warrior nodded and said, "thank you for the warning. I will be sure to let my cats know. And good luck to you, and may StarClan be with you." Fireheart nodded in thanks before following his apprentice.

Cloudpaw already swam to the other side of the river when Fireheart started to swim. Once Fireheart made it across, he signaled his apprentice to stay low, since they were in ThunderClan territory. The two cats stayed low as they found the wooden fences of the twoleg place. "This way." Fireheart said. They followed the fenceline until they made it to Princess' den.

Fireheart immediately jumped over the fence and said, "Princess." She perked under her tree. "Fireheart. You look awful. What happened? And is that Cloudpaw? Oh, my kit. You have gotten bigger. Are you a warrior yet?"

Cloudpaw sighed in disappointment "I'm afraid I can't." Princess looked at Fireheart confused and asked, "what does he mean?" Fireheart confessed, "we had to leave. Our leader, Bluestar, was killed in a camp raid. The new leader has a hatred for kittypets. We would never be safe if we stayed because sooner or later we would be chased out."

Princess looked frightened as she said, "oh, Fireheart, that's awful!"

She gave brother and son a loving lick before saying, "so what are you planning?" Cloudpaw looked at his mother and said, "I want to live as a kittypet with you." Fireheart looked at his apprentice with surprise. Cloudpaw looked at Fireheart and said, "last night, I was thinking about things. We can't go back to ThunderClan, and you may have friends in other clans, but I think I should stay with Princess. I want to know my daily routine and know what I am going to eat the next day. S-So-"

Fireheart stopped Cloudpaw. "You don't have to explain. It seemed you already made up your mind." Cloudpaw sighed in relief, as if he suspected his mentor to yell at him. Princess licked her son and said, "of course you can stay with me." She turned to Fireheart and said, "what about you?"

Fireheart thought for a moment before saying, "I have lived and hunted in the forest for a while now. I cannot go back to being a kittypet." Princess nodded and said, "I understand. You have seen and done so much. Go well Fireheart." She and Cloudpaw turned to go into the twoleg den but Fireheart said, "wait. I have to do something first." The two cats turned. "Cloudpaw, come forward." the white tom stepped forward a bit confusingly. "I, Fireheart, former warrior of ThunderClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentice. He has trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend him to you as a warrior in his turn." Cloudpaw seemed bewildered that his mentor was doing his warrior ceremony.

"Cloudpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your kin, even at the cost of your life?" Fireheart continued. Cloudpaw excitedly said, "I do." Princess looked excited. Even though she never lived in a Clan, she knew this was important to Clan life

Fireheart remembered his own warrior ceremony as he continued, "Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name. Cloudpaw, from this moment on you will be known as Cloudtail. StarClan honors your energy and enthusiasm, and we welcome you as a full warrior."

"Cloudtail!" Princess said aloud. "Cloudtail!" Fireheart said.

Fireheart touched Cloudtail's head and said, "goodbye, Cloudtail. Protect your mother." Cloudtail replied sullenly, "you don't have to leave."

Fireheart sighed and turned away, knowing the longer he stayed, the harder it would be to leave. The ginger tom jumped on to the fence and turned to Cloudtail and Princess to say, "I will come visit if I can." Princess nodded and said, "please do. I don't want to worry about you too much. Goodbye Fireheart."

"Goodbye Princess. Goodbye Cloudtail. I hope to see you soon." Fireheart said, trying not to sound wretched. Princess lead Cloudtail into the twoleg den, ultimately disappearing in the doorway. Fireheart felt a sudden pain of loss and confoundment. What is he going to do next?

Chapter 3

Fireheart walked along the fence for a bit before he made it to his former kittypet home. He sighed. The morning sky and cool air made Fireheart feel relaxed. He went through so much just to end up Clanless, and on top of it, denless. As Fireheart sighed and turned, a tabby she-cat squealed, "wild cat. What are you doing on my fence?"

Fireheart looked at the yard he use to share tongues with Smudge and other such kittypets. "I didn't mean to startle you," Fireheart said as least threatening as possible, "just visiting old haunts." Fireheart laughed and said, "just think, I use to live in that nest."

The tabby perked up and said, "you must be Rusty, the kittypet who left his housefolk to become a wild cat. Smudge talked so much about you when I first came here." She sprung onto the fence and leaped to Smudge's den. "Smudge! Come here. A cat hear said he use to live here."

A grumpy sounding tom sighed and said, "for our housefolks' sakes, keep it down Haiti. We don't want other housefolks throw things or complain again." Scraping sounds of the two kittypets shook the fence before both of them made it over. "Hello, old friend." Smudge said. "I haven't seen you in ages."

"Same here, Smudge. How's it been?" Fireheart asked, not wanting to be rude. Smudge twitched his ears and said, "it's fine. I see you've met Haiti, the kittypet who lives with your old housefolk." Haiti excitedly said, "how do you do." Fireheart nodded in response. "So," Smudge said, "what brings you back?"

Fireheart didn't want to scare the two, so he simply stated, "I'm just passing through. Sorry for intruding. I will be going if you don't mind." Smudge perked his ears and said, "no not at all. Hope to see you around!"

"Wait," Haiti stopped Fireheart. "Why don't you sleep here under the

bushes. You look tired." Fireheart almost rejected het offer but felt his legs shake. He had just been through a tough time with leaving ThunderClan and crossing the river multiple times.

"Alright," Fireheart said, "but I will only stay until before sunhigh. Than I must leave. Thank you for your offer." Haiti purred at Fireheart's kind words. The ginger tom went through the bushes as Haiti and Smudge jumped onto the fence that separated the two yards. Fireheart's mind wandered into sleep as he thought how funny it was that he is in the same yard his journey to the Clans began. He only wished he saved Bluestar.

Chapter 4

Fireheart woke awhile before sunhigh and jumped onto the fence. He wanted to leave for highstones, or at least to Fourtrees, as soon as possible so he wouldn't run into an evening patrol. The ginger tom planned to go straight through ThunderClan territory. It may be risky, but it was the quickest way.

Just as he jumped down from the fence, the forest seemed very foreign to the tom. Every crack seemed to come from an unseen enemy. Fireheart knew he had to be wary. He lowered his haunches as he crept quietly through the forest. As he got closer to Owl Tree, rustling behind Fireheart made him jump.

To his astonishment and relief, it was a ThunderClan patrol consisting of Whitestorm, Willowpelt, Sandstorm, and Runningwind. "Fireheart?" Whitestorm asked surprised. "Where have you been?"

"It's good to see you too." Fireheart guiltingly said, "all of you." Everyone in the patrol seemed a bit surprised, but Fireheart wasn't sure if it was from them realizing he was missing or if they thought they would never see him again.

"Where have you been?" Whitestorm asked again. Fireheart scrambled what he was going to say when Sandstorm stepped in, "what do you think? The only cat that made Fireheart feel so welcomed and protected was Bluestar. Isn't that right?"

Fireheart wasn't surprised at her response of him showing up unexpectedly after being gone for a day or two. But it was true. The only reason Fireheart didn't feel so secluded was because of Bluestar. "I'm sorry if I upset any of you," Fireheart began, "but it's true. Bluestar was the only reason I felt truly safe from rumors and being scorned at. I don't feel safe with Tigerclaw as leader."

"Tigerstar now." Runningwind butted in. "And I-we understand." Willowpelt nodded and Whitestorm mumbled in agreement. Only

Sandstorm stayed still, but Fireheart knew she agreed. "So," Fireheart said, "who's deputy?"

"Longtail." Willowpelt said, "With the help of Whitestorm." Fireheart huffed as he said, "Darkstripe must be upset." Whitestorm chimed in, "he stayed pretty quiet during the Deputy ceremony, but we all knew he was outraged that, in his eyes, an inexperienced warrior was made a higher rank than he was."

"I understand, though," Fireheart said, "why Tigerstar did that. Darkstripe would follow orders blindly, and just that. Longtail has potential of, although stubbornly, being a good leader and a good cat."

"That's surprising, coming from you," a laughter came out of Sandstorm, "considering the fact that he insulted you for being a kittypet." Fireheart perked and said, "Longtail may be a thorn in the paw, but he's still a good cat." Fireheart remembered when Longtail saved his life from drowning near Fourtrees, no thanks to Tigerstar.

As the ginger tom finished him thoughts, he remembered that he had to leave the territory. "Look," Fireheart said, "I have to go. The longer I stay with you, the more danger you are all in." All of the patrol awkwardly looked at their paws before saying goodbyes. Sandstorm gave the ginger tom a lick before leaving. "Stay safe, Fireheart."

As the cats stalked off, Whitestorm faced Fireheart seriously and said, "please, Fireheart, be safe. For Bluestar's sake." Fireheart took the senior warrior's words to heart as he responded, "and you too, Whitestorm. Please take care of the clan like Bluestar once did." Whitestorm nodded and turned towards his patrolmates. "Goodbye, old friend." Fireheart whispered.

Chapter 5

Fireheart made his way to highstones, being wary of WindClan territory. He knew he had friends in WindClan, but Fireheart knew he could not barge into WindClan camp uninvited. As the ginger tom made his way through WindClan territory, he scented a WindClan patrol. Fireheart shrunk low in the heather. As he hoped, the WindClan cats seemed to not notice.

A cat suddenly turned towards him and stalked to Fireheart's hiding spot, but stopped as his Clanmates called him. The WindClan cat looked one last time towards the heather before turning and walking off. Fireheart sighed in relief. WindClan still despised ThunderClan for housing the cat who chased them out, Brokentail.

Fireheart cautiously got up from his hiding spot and trekked onward, ultimately making it to the Thunderpath close to Highstones. Fireheart sighed and braced himself to run across. A monster roared past as Fireheart took this chance to run. No monster was in sight once he crossed. A sudden wind made Fireheart shiver. It was almost night.

He rushed to highstones and found Mothermouth. Fireheart sighed. Memories of the time he was apprenticed flushed through his head. From the time he entered with Bluestar, to the rat attack. If only the rats didn't take one of her lives. Fireheart shook his head. He couldn't think about that. As he padded through the cave, the faint scent, two days at least, of two cats filled his nose.

One was Tigerstar, Fireheart assumed, and Yellowfang. Fireheart sighed, knowing there was no way to stop Tigerstar now. The ginger tom continued forward until he reached the Moonstone. Even after seeing it before, it still filled Fireheart with awe. He touched his nose against the stone, shivering. What if he didn't see any StarClan cats? As Fireheart thought that for a moment, everything around him slowly went dark.

Chapter 6

Fireheart woke up in a forest. He looked around in confusion. Wasn't he last in Highstones? "Interesting, isn't it?" a calm voice said behind him. Fireheart turned around to see a young blue gray she-cat standing before him.

Fireheart filled with excitement as he said, "Bluestar." A sudden sadness filled him as he said, "I'm sorry. I failed you. I should have stopped Tigerstar from entering your den. I..." tears filled the young tom's eyes. The picture filled his head of Tigerclaw's jaws stained with blood, the dark tom glaring at Fireheart in victory and mockery before throwing himself at Brokentail, killing the former ShadowClan leader and dragging him towards Bluestar's den to make it look like it was Brokentail's fault.

"Fireheart, look at me." Bluestar said in a calm but determined voice. Fireheart felt obligated to look into his leader's blue eyes. "Oh, Fireheart," Bluestar said, "there is so much you were destined to do. But there is no hope now."

"No." Fireheart said. "There has to be another way." A laughter came from behind Bluestar. The former leader sneered as she looked at a gray tom behind her. "What a determined warrior you have there, Bluestar. You were right about him."

"With much respect, Cinderfur," Bluestar stated, "he is my warrior, not ShadowClan's." Fireheart looked at the two cats, suddenly realizing Cinderfur was Nightstar's Deputy. Cinderfur growled, "Nightstar is close to joining us. We need someone to be leader."

Bluestar tried to protest, her haunches raised. Fireheart stepped between the two StarClan cats. "That's enough." the ginger tom hissed. "I have no Clan, Bluestar. If Cinderfur is here in StarClan and if he is right about Nightstar, I have to help ShadowClan. Before Tigerstar takes over their clan too." Bluestar lowered her haunches with some effort. Cinderfur looked at Fireheart and said "thank you."

She sighed and said, "I shall go." Fireheart stepped towards Bluestar and said, "you will forever be my mentor and I have learned everything from you. I will make you proud, even in a different Clan." Pride filled Bluestar's eyes and said, "go. Protect ShadowClan." As Cinderfur and Bluestar turned to leave, Cinderfur prophesied, "cats you may think as enemies will be your greatest ally. Trust them. They will make the Clan strong."

Chapter 7

Fireheart took his nose off of the Moonstone and decided to head towards Barley's Barn. It had been moons since Fireheart had seen any of them. Plus, Fireheart could go for a plump mouse or two before helping ShadowClan.

The sun just peeked over the horizon as Fireheart stepped out of the cave. A cold breeze swept through Fireheart's ginger fur, sending a shiver down his spine. He suddenly felt tired and knew he had to make it the Barley's farm. The tom strongly paced himself toward the farm while keeping watch for loose dogs and twolegs.

No dogs seemed to be out as Fireheart made his way through the barn's entrance. "Barley." Fireheart said aloud, "Ravenpaw. It's Fireheart." Bumps in the hay started to move towards Fireheart. A black and white head of Barley followed by Ravenpaw's black head poked out of the hay.

"Fireheart." Ravenpaw said, "it's been too long." Fireheart responded, "indeed. A lot has happened since I last I saw you." Barley looked behind Fireheart before saying, "I expected your other friend, Graystripe was it, to be behind you. Or Bluestar." Fireheart lowered his head. "Bluestar's dead." Fireheart said.

Ravenpaw's eyes widened. "It was from Tigerclaw, wasn't it." Fireheart nodded and said, "Tigerstar now." Before Fireheart could continue, Barley interrupted, "eat, rest. You have a lot to talk about about but you look like a dog ruffled your fur."

"Shall I hunt for you?" Ravenpaw asked. Fireheart was about to decline, but his legs felt tired. Ravenpaw took his quietness as a yes because he turned and went into a hunting crouch. Barley led Fireheart to a hay made nest and said, "sleep. We'll wake you after the sun leaves the horizon."

Fireheart did not argue. He felt too tired to do so. The ginger tom curled and, before he succumbed to sleep, remembered what

Cinderfur said to him. What enemies was he talking about?

Chapter 8

Ravenpaw woke Fireheart up with a few mice in his jaws. Fireheart sat up and grabbed one of them. "So," Ravenpaw said with Barley sitting next to him, "start at the beginning." Fireheart took a mouthful of mouse before starting, "I was out with my apprentice, who is my sister's kit, Cloudpaw, when he scented Brokentail's followers led by then Tigerclaw heading towards ThunderClan's camp. He and I knew this was bad news so we ran back to camp to help fight them off."

Fireheart stopped. He felt sadness and anger fill him. "We were too late. Tigerclaw had already killed Bluestar. I wanted to attack him, but he went out of sight and soon I saw him dragging Brokentail's dead body towards Bluestar's den. I think he did that to make it look like Brokentail killed her."

Fireheart took a big sigh, "afterwards, Tigerclaw pinned a brown and gray she-cat, Tangleburr I think her name was, and killed her before sneering at Blackfoot. I saw Blackfoot physically lose all trust in Tigerclaw as he threw himself full force at the former deputy, seriously injuring Blackfoot."

Fireheart took a second to let Ravenpaw settle. The ginger tom saw the former apprentice shake in fear and anger. The black tom forced himself to calm down before saying, "what happened next?"

Fireheart took in a breath before continuing, "I was one of the cats to follow and chase out the rogues. I saw a cat who I believe was not from ShadowClan but tried to attack me during the fight. I pinned him and he told me Tigerclaw was trying to have me killed. And that's why..."

Fireheart stopped. He couldn't finish. "And that's why you left." Barley said. Fireheart nodded, "with Graystripe's kits, Graystripe, and my apprentice." Fireheart said, "I sent Cloudpaw to live with his mother and Graystripe stayed in RiverClan with his kits."

"Well, what's your plan?" Ravenpaw asked. Cinderfur's prophecy rang in Fireheart's ear as Ravenpaw said that. "I have no clue." Fireheart said. Ravenpaw looked confused, "didn't you go to the Moonstone? Didn't StarClan speak to you?"

"Yes." Fireheart said, "but what they said wasn't exactly clear." Barley laughed. "Well," the black and white loner said, "whatever they said, you will figure it out. But before then, you can stay here. We can always use another cat from time to time."

Fireheart nodded in thanks as he ate his mouse. Once Barley left the barn, Ravenpaw asked, "what did StarClan say to you?" Fireheart finished his mouse and told the tom everything, from Bluestar apologizing to Cinderfur begging to help ShadowClan. "And before I left," Fireheart said, "Cinderfur said to me 'cats you may think as enemies will be your greatest ally. Trust them. They will make the Clan strong.' I don't know what it means."

Ravenpaw seemed strong in thought. "It can't be Tigerstar. There is no way they're talking about him." The black tom fell quiet again for a few heartbeats. "What about Brokentail's rogues? They were our major enemies once." Fireheart thought about it. They were his enemy,and since Tigerstar killed one of them and hurt another. "I think you're right. But I am not fully sure."

Ravenpaw nodded, "be wary if it is true." The black tom stood up and followed Barley's scent. "Oh, Fireheart," Ravenpaw said, "if you are getting Brokentail's rogues to rejoin ShadowClan, warn Tallstar. He might not trust you if you bring back those rogues without warning."

Chapter 9

Fireheart spent a few days at the farm. It felt good to rest for a few days before setting out again. Fireheart knew, however, he had to leave eventually. He looked out at the rising sun. He sighed and knew he needed to leave. Fireheart turned to the two loners behind him and said, "it's time for me to leave. Thank you, both of you."

Barley nodded and replied, "any time. And if you need to stay the night, just drop by." Fireheart nodded in thanks and turned to Ravenpaw. "I will take your advice. All of it

Tallstar needs to know. And I will be wary." He finished his goodbyes with more thanks before leaving.

Fireheart went straight for WindClan territory in hopes to talk to Tallstar. He crept through the heather and long grass before realizing he was being tracked. Fireheart sniffed the air and found that it was Onewhisker and another cat Fireheart can't figure out.

"Alright," Fireheart heard Onewhisker say, "where is the cat now, Gorsepaw?" Fireheart suddenly knew who the second cat was. It was Morningflower's kit Fireheart carried after finding and bringing WindClan back. Fireheart felt like it was necessary to get caught, but to make it challenging to help test Gorsepaw.

Fireheart immediately sprang forward and ran. The ginger tom went one direction, than another. He heard footsteps following close behind him. Fireheart spotted some rocky outcrops in front of him. He ran there, than doubled back to throw them off his track. It seemed to work, because the two cats walked past without scenting him.

"Where did he go?" Fireheart heard Gorsepaw say. A laugh came from Onewhisker before saying, "use your nose. Do you smell any scent to show where he went?" A hard sniff from Gorsepaw before the apprentice said, "this way, I think." The two WindClan cats started to pad towards Fireheart's hiding spot. Gorsepaw

immediately sprang at Fireheart once the apprentice saw him.

"Look. Tracked by my apprentice." Onewhisker joked. Fireheart jokingly sneered, "hey. I helped you with training." Onewhisker huffed in amusement. "Come on," Onewhisker said seriously "I will take you to Tallstar." Gorsepaw protested, "why are taking an enemy cat to our camp? He's an intruder!"

"He's a friend of WindClan." Onewhisker said, "he helped your mother carry you back to WindClan territory. And besides, no cat is crazy enough to enter our territory alone without wanting to talk to Tallstar." The brown tabby warrior signaled his tail to follow.

The three cats made it to camp before sunhigh. Fireheart saw all of WindClan sharing tongues. Kits were playing and apprentices practicing fighting moves. Warriors shared prey and elders were sunning themselves. Fireheart felt heartbroken. He missed sharing tongues with his former Clanmates.

While Fireheart was observing, he did not notice Tallstar emerging from his den. Onewhisker walked to his leader out of earshot. Tallstar nodded to Onewhisker said and strolled towards Fireheart, followed by Deadfoot, Tallstar's deputy, and Mudclaw. "Tallstar." Fireheart said respectfully. Tallstar nodded. "Onewhisker told me you need to tell me something."

"That is true." Fireheart said. Tallstar looked at his two warriors next to him and said, "leave us." As the two toms turned, Fireheart said, "no need. It might be important for some senior warriors to hear." Deadfoot nodded and signaled his tail for Mudclaw to get other warriors. Mudclaw did so, and within a few heartbeats, a few other warriors came by.

"What is so important," Mudclaw scorned, "that I'm not hunting." Onewhisker silenced the tabby with a look. Now every warrior in the huddle looked at Fireheart. The ginger tom felt a sudden nervousness. "A StarClan cat came to me when I went to the Moonstone. He told me I needed to help ShadowClan. He said 'cats you may think as enemies will be your greatest ally. Trust them. They will make ShadowClan strong.'"

"So, why are you telling us that?" a warrior asked. "Because," Fireheart said, "I believe the enemies StarClan were talking about are Brokentail's followers." A few WindClan warriors gasped or raised there haunches. Mudclaw unsheathed his claws. Tallstar tried to stay calm, but Fireheart knew the leader was upset. Bringing back cats who chase his entire clan will be hated.

Before Fireheart could assure the WindClan cats, Mudclaw hissed, "we should have never trusted him. Let's chase him out of our territory." The brown tabby launched himself at Fireheart, and Fireheart felt he could not convince WindClan he is trying to do the right thing.

Chapter 10

Fireheart prepared for Mudclaw to attack, but Onewhisker stepped in front of the agitated warrior. "If Fireheart felt like he needed to tell us," Onewhisker said, "it shows that even he is concerned as well. If StarClan came to any of you and told you to do what they asked him to do, would you have the courage to find and bring back the cats who chased us out?"

A few cats murmured in agreement. Fireheart felt relieved. The ginger tom turned to Tallstar. The black and white leader looked concerned. "You don't have to support me." Fireheart said. "But StarClan asked me to help ShadowClan, to bring those cats back. I'm just concerned that I won't have an ally in WindClan. I know you haven't trusted me since we held Brokentail, but I have to help ShadowClan."

Tallstar looked at his warriors. "Leave us." he told them. The warriors hesitated. Onewhisker was the first to leave, followed by other warriors. Mudclaw was the last to leave, narrowing his eyes at Fireheart. Once the tabby with out of earshot, Tallstar said, "If StarClan said so, than so be it. If you succeed in finding and doing what StarClan said, and I know you will, you will not lose WindClan as an ally. But if those cats ever set a foot in my territory, you will be warned."

"I know you will protect your clan." Fireheart said, "But I promise you, I will take care of them personally if they do." Tallstar nodded in respect. "Wise words, Fireheart. Bluestar taught you well." Not well enough, Fireheart thought. "I still have a lot to learn." Fireheart said. "And StarClan knows what challenges I will be facing."

"Truer words," Tallstar said. "May StarClan light your path." Fireheart nodded in thanks. "Oh," Fireheart said quickly as Tallstar padded to his camp. "Be wary of Tigerstar. He is a cat not to be trusted."

"He is a powerful cat." the elder cat said, "But, I will take your word

for it." Fireheart felt a bit of relief as he turned towards Fourtrees. He knew what he had to do. Protect a new clan and help them recover.

Chapter 11

It was dusk when Fireheart made it to where he last saw those rogues. He was cautious when he crossed ThunderClan territory. Fireheart was lucky the last time he was caught the first time. He scented for those rogues. He immediately found the very faint scent of the tom he pinned when chasing them out.

It was hard to follow the scent, but it lead him to a clearing. He stopped when he heard a small whisper. "It's ThunderClan." a voice said. "No." Fireheart responded. "I left ThunderClan." A cold hiss roared, "Why would you leave?"

"The same way you were chased out." Fireheart said. "By Tigerstar." The cats went silent. A brown tom showed himself cautiously. "Who is leading you?" Fireheart asked. The brown tom looked back and said, "Blackfoot, but he's seriously hurt."

Fireheart thought for a moment. "Ok," Fireheart began. "Is there a piece of territory in ShadowClan where we can stay?" A cold hiss came again, "who put him in charge?" A white head followed the voice. Blackfoot looked awful. His fur was unkempt, a wound on his chest looked unhealthy, and his eyes were crusty looking.

Fireheart stood his ground. "You would have nothing to lead with that wound." the ginger tom said. Blackfoot was about to protest when a plain brown tom walked towards the cats. Fireheart knew this was the cat who attacked him. The brown tom looked startled to see Fireheart again. "No worries." Fireheart reassured, "I'm not here to hurt you. I'm only here to help. Now is that all we have?"

Fireheart looked at all the cats. There was Blackfoot, the brown tabby with a stubby tail, the cat who attacked him, and a ginger tabby. "We did have one more," the ginger tabby said, "but Tigerstar got to her."

"So," Fireheart said, "about a territory." The stubby tail cat said, "Let's stay here until daylight. It will be hard to travel at night."

Fireheart twitched his ear in irritation. "It'll be easier," Fireheart said, "to hide in the night." Blackfoot and the ginger rogue murmured in agreement. The stubby tailed tabby lowered his head. Fireheart felt like a leader.

"I know where the territory is." Blackfoot said. Fireheart knew he could not argue with the injured tom. Blackfoot proudly limped in the lead. Fireheart took this group easy. These were not his Clan. Not yet.

Chapter 12

Fireheart followed the rogues under the thunderpath from a tunnel that cross ThunderClan and ShadowClan territories. He hesitated. "What?" Stubbytail mocked, "You scared?" Fireheart sighed. He had cross the border.

Fireheart followed the rogues into ShadowClan territory, keeping watch for any ShadowClan cats taking a night stroll. Only wind filled his ears. As the rogues made it across the territory, Blackfoot stopped. "We're here." the big tom said. A thorny line of twoleg bushes stood tall in front of them. "This is the furthest part of ShadowClan territory." Stubbytail said. "There are stories that dangers on the other side."

"Those are just stories though, right?" Mowgli asked. Blackfoot growled frustratedly, "Of course those are just stories. Why would I drag all of you here if it was dangerous." Fireheart nodded. Clearly, these cats know what they are talking about. No one moved. Fireheart sighed, knowing these cats are worried on what might be behind there. Fireheart looked at Blackfoot in anticipation.

Blackfoot led the way into the bushes. They were thick and thorny. Fireheart was surprise how eloquently Blackfoot seemed when the bulky white tom made his way through. "Be careful, Blackfoot." Fireheart heard Stubbytail say, "You don't want to open your wound." Blackfoot growled. Fireheart understood this cat was prideful and wouldn't admit to being hurt.

Fireheart told Blackfoot up front, "He has a point. With Brokentail dead and Tigerstar betraying you, they need a leader." Blackfoot hissed, "then why don't you lead us?" Fireheart patience was growing thin. "Because," Fireheart stated, "it's not my place to lead you. You are all kin. I'm just a kittypet Bluestar took in." Blackfoot's hard gaze soften a bit.

"Can we get a move on," Snag said behind them, "It's night and I don't want to sleep in these thorny bushes." Fireheart knew the tom

had a fair point. The group crammed forward. Fireheart was the first to break through the bushes. The smell of oak and fern made the ginger tom feel a mix of emotion. It reminded him of ThunderClan.

The others stepped beside Fireheart. "Ok." Blackfoot commanded, "let's make camp here. Rest tonight. We will patrol and hunt tomorrow. We might be here for a while." Fireheart agreed, though he knew eventually, they would have to run into ShadowClan.

Chapter 13

Fireheart woke up in a panic. He dreamt his former Clanmates in ThunderClan were running from something Fireheart couldn't see. The sky went dark and then he woke up. The tom shook his head. "It was only a dream." he spoke aloud. It was early morning when Fireheart got out of his nest. Blackfoot was still sleeping. The white tom's wounds hadn't healed well and an infection was inevitable.

Fireheart took in the cold morning air. The cats had only been a few days in the small oak territory off of ShadowClan, but it felt like home to Fireheart. A sudden movement came from the bushes. Fireheart turned to see Stubbytail sneaking into the territory. "Where have you been gone too?" Fireheart asked. Stubbytail jumped. "I-I was hunting." Stubbytail obviously lied. Fireheart nodded, "In ShadowClan territory?"

Stubbytail looked at his paws as he realized he was caught. "I wanted to check on ShadowClan." Stubbytail said. "I heard there was a sickness in the camp. They are my kin and-." Fireheart stopped him. "I understand." Fireheart reassured the brown tabby. "I would check on ThunderClan if something bad happened to them." Stubbytail looked relieved. "Shall I go hunting?" the short tailed rogue asked. Fireheart nodded, "get something for Blackfoot, if you can." the brown tabby nodded.

Stubbytail went off. Fireheart sat alone once more, trying to remember what Spottedleaf or Yellowfang had told him about herbs that might help Blackfoot.

Fireheart must have zoned out because Snag nosed the tom. Fireheart looked at him confused. Snag seemed startled and worried. "What is it?" Fireheart asked. Snag spoke nervously, "Some cats are outside the bushes. They seem to know we are here." As Snag spoke, Stubbytail and Mowgli walked pass.

Stubbytail immediately perked up when Snag told him what he scented. "It must be ShadowClan!" Stubbytail said. "It must be."

Fireheart silenced him, "Who knows if they think we are a threat. You of all cats should know this." Stubbytail looked at his paws. "I'm sorry." Stubbytail muttered. Fireheart felt guilty for snapping at the tom. "I'm not the cat you need to apologize to." Fireheart said confidentiality.

"Wait," Stubbytail said, "So we're going to aid ShadowClan?" Fireheart nodded. "Maybe," the fiery tom spoke, "we can get something in return." Stubbytail looked towards the makeshift den where Blackfoot slept. "What's the plan?" Mowgli asked. Fireheart thought for a moment.

"Ok." the fiery tom spoke. Snag, Stubbytail, you two come with me. Mowgli, you have done enough for the day. Eat and rest. Check on Blackfoot if you can." Mowgli nodded and did as he was told. The other two rogues waited patiently for Fireheart's command. The fiery tom turned to Snag. "Show me where you saw the cats."

Chapter 14

Snag led the way towards ShadowClan. As they made their way, the scent of ShadowClan cats was recognized. "Ok,"Fireheart said, "I will go forward first. They might feel less threatened by an ally." Snag tilted his head. "Doesn't ShadowClan hate you for keeping Brokentail?" Fireheart heart sank. He did not think about that.

"I have a plan." Fireheart lied. He knew he had to. Fireheart turned and pushed through the bushes. As he stuck his head out, a small patrol was already a foxlength ahead. "Russetfur, is it?" Fireheart called to one of the she-cats. The reddish cat turned her head, surprised to see Fireheart there. Next l to her was a cream and brown she-cat and a gray apprentice.

"You're Fireheart." Russetfur said, "the ThunderClan cat." Fireheart nodded. So far, it went well. The brown and cream she-cat lowered her ears and hissed, "you kept a traitor of all the clans in your camp." Fireheart started to apologize, "It wasn't my idea. We-I knew it felt wrong to keep the cat I helped chase out in our camp."

"You should have thrown him out of camp to let him die." the cream and brown she-cat raised her haunches when Stubbytail stepped forward. "Rowanberry." The cream and brown she-cat looked surprised. "Why are you here?" Rowanberry hissed, "Is this an attack?"

"We didn't come here to harm you. We only came to help." Fireheart said. Russetfur looked confused, then aggressive. "Help us?" the ginger she-cat hissed, "With what?" Fireheart thought to himself. How much should he say he knows? "Maybe," Fireheart started, "if we help you with something, you could help us in return."

"How so?" Rowenbarry asked. Fireheart knew now what he had to say. "We can hunt for you and your Clan." The brown and cream she-cat tilted her head, "and what will we give you in return?" Fireheart looked at Stubbytail and Snag. They both seemed to know what he was thinking because they both nodded.

"We need help with an injured cat." Fireheart said. The cat Fireheart assumed was an apprentice spoke, "are you saying we give you herbs? We barely have enough to help our sickness." Russetfur whacked the apprentice's ear as if he said to much. The gray tom fell silent. Fireheart continued, "We don't need your herbs. We just want to know what kind of herbs we need to help him heal."

The two warriors turned to each other. "Nightstar needs to hear this." Russetfur said. Rowenbarry nodded in agreement. "You, Fireheart, come with us alone." Fireheart agreed, though his accomplices seemed skeptical. "For Blackfoot." Fireheart said. Stubbytail and Snag sighed, "For Blackfoot."

Fireheart followed the ShadowClan cats to their camp. A feeling of nervousness filled him. What if Nightstar said no? Would Blackfoot die if so? Fireheart stopped worrying when a sickly stench filled his nose. Fireheart entered the camp and was shocked. All these cats seemed so weak and starving.

Russetfur went straight for the leaders. As she did, Fireheart had a sudden memory when he first came to the ShadowClan camp, chasing out Brokentail and his cats. It seemed funny to Fireheart that StarClan is asking him to do something that he practically started.

Russetfur came back to Fireheart. "Follow me." she spoke. Fireheart obeyed. She lead the way to the leader's den where Nightstar and Runningnose sat. Fireheart tried to hide his shock as he laid eyes on the leader. Nightstar's pelt was unkempt, his eyes were tired, and the smell of sickness filled the air.

"Hello, Fireheart," Nightstar spoke. Runningnose turned to Russetfur and said, "leave us, but stay close." Russetfur obeyed. Once she left, Nightstar asked, "Why are you here?" Fireheart twitched his ears. "Cinderfur came to me in a dream." Fireheart said. Both ShadowClan cats looked surprised. "Why would he come to you in a dream?" Nightstar asked.

Fireheart explained everything Cinderfur told him, from wanting Fireheart to help ShadowClan, to bringing Brokentail's rogues back to ShadowClan. The ShadowClan cats seemed bewildered. "Why

would he not come to me?" Nightstar asked. Runningnose suddenly asked, "What about ThuderClan? Surely you were loyal to them. Why help us?"

Fireheart was shocked. He Fireheart sighed, "I left ThunderClan. They don't need me anymore." The two ShadowClan cats looked at each other. "But where does your loyalty lie?" Fireheart was confused. "What do you mean?"

"Never mind that." Nightstar spoke, "Do you really think we would accept those traitors back here?" Fireheart frantically thought of ways to convince them. "We only want to help." Fireheart said, "You need warriors after that sickness."

"How do you know about or sickness?" Nightstar growled. Fireheart frantically said "Cinderfur came to me and told me in a dream. What more do you want?" Fireheart shook. "Please. I only asked to help because Blackfoot has an infected wound. I-"

"No." Nightstar said, "Unless StarClan comes to me, I will never trust you. Now get out of my camp." Fireheart looked at Runningnose. The sickly gray and white tom looked down, not wanting to upset his leader more. "Very well." Fireheart said, trying not to sound upset, "but if you change your mind, your cats know where to find me."

Russetfur was outside of the leaders den waiting for Fireheart. "What did he say?" the she-cat asked. Fireheart shook his head. Russetfur looked physically upset. "I will try to convince him to let you at least help us." she spoke. Fireheart felt a bit relieved that one cat seemed to want the rogues there.

"Thank you." Fireheart said, "If your clan ever needs prey or anything, you know where to find us." Russetfur perked up and said, "I'll bring you there." Fireheart agreed and the two cats left camp.

As the cats made their way to Fireheart's territory, the tom thought he heard a cat calling his name. The ginger cat turned to see Runningnose holding a few herbs in his jaws. "These are for Blackfoot." the sickly tom said, "squeeze the juice on the wound. If

it isn't too infected, these would help drastically."

Fireheart felt flattered. "Thank you." he said, "our territory is full of prey and herbs. If you need any, you are welcome to ask." The medicine cat nodded in thanks. Fireheart took the herbs and followed Russetfur. "Oh, and Fireheart," Runningnose said, "Watch where your loyalty lies. It may hurt you."

Chapter 15

"I take your lackluster appearance as a sign of Nightstar saying no." Snag joked. Fireheart sighed. Snag's eyes softened a bit. "Come on." the rogue said, "Let's get those herbs to Blackfoot."

Fireheart took the herbs and went straight to Blackfoot. Stubbytail was in the den with the white tom. "Any good news?" the stub tailed tom asked. Fireheart sighed, "only the herbs." Stubbytail seemed disappointed. "Hey," Fireheart spoke, "I spoke to a few ShadowClan cats. I offered them some prey to hunt."

"You did what?" Blackfoot growled. Fireheart jumped. He did not expect the white tom to be awake. "Calm down, Blackfoot." Stubbytail said, "Maybe if we show them we won't hurt them, Nightstar might trust us."

"Trust us?" Blackfoot spoke, "All we did was betray ShadowClan. Why would they trust us?" Fireheart understood the white tom's thoughts and worries. Fireheart himself worried ThunderClan will deem him a traitor for leaving on a hunch. "Well," Fireheart stated, "It seemed Nightstar was the only cat who acted like you were traitors. Everyone else seemed thrilled to hear that you were in their territory."

Blackfoot seemed surprise. "Maybe there's a chance we might be accepted back." Fireheart's heart slowed. The ginger tom grabbed the herbs. "Show me the wound." Blackfoot hissed, but turned. The wound looked awful. Fireheart held in his shock and squeezed some herbs on it. Fireheart saw a few poppy seeds and said, "Here. This will take the pain off."

Blackfoot growled but took the seeds. "When did you become a medicine cat?" Stubbytail joked. Fireheart laughed a bit. After finishing with Blackfoot, Fireheart heard Snag and Mowgli padding to the den. Stubbytail perked at the sound of the two rogues. "I smell prey." the short tailed tom said. The rogues entered the den, and in their jaws were frogs and lizards.

Fireheart's nose wrinkled. Stubbytail huffed, "This is normal ShadowClan prey. Better get used to it." Fireheart sighed and took a frog. He was surprised how decent it tasted, despite how slimy it was. After being fully fed, the rogues curled up in their nests. Fireheart looked out the den entrance and saw a few stars in StarClan glimmering. He sighed and told himself, things will happen eventually.

Chapter 16

"Ok." Russetfur spoke with enthusiasm, "Let's hunt." A ShadowClan patrol consisting of Russetfur, her apprentice Cedarpaw, and Wetfoot, came to their territory as the sun broke the horizon. Fireheart was surprised Nightstar let them. Nonetheless, Fireheart was pleased to see ShadowClan was trusting him and his cats.

As Fireheart, Stubbytail, and the ShadowClan patrol began to hunt, a ShadowClan cat, Boulder, entered the foresty territory. "Nightstar wants to speak to you." the gray warrior said. Fireheart thought, then spoke, "just me?" Boulder shook his head. "He wants you to bring the rogues." Fireheart heard Wetfoot mutter under his breath, "so much for hunting." Russetfur gave the warrior a hard look. He fell silent.

Fireheart twitched his ears and looked at Stubbytail. The short tailed rogue seemed ecstatic at the opportunity of being in ShadowClan. Fireheart nodded and Stubbytail immediately sprang towards their den. Almost at once Blackfoot limped out with the help of Mowgli. The ShadowClan cats seemed surprised at the condition of their former deputy.

Blackfoot's wound seemed to be worse. Russetfur immediately jumped to the other side of Blackfoot and guided him. Wetfoot fell beside Fireheart. "Is he alright." Fireheart shook his head. "We tried to help him," the fiery tom said, "but it seems we are too late." The gray warrior murmured in agreement. "May StarClan give him calmness." Wetfoot spoke.

Fireheart nodded at the warrior before spotting Snag and Stubbytail talking to Boulder. Stubbytail seemed excited to see his former Clanmates again. Fireheart understood the warrior's feeling. The ginger tom wondered how ThunderClan was doing when they noticed his disappearance. Fireheart shook his head. He had things to do. As the cats made their way, Stubbytail and Snag sprang forward. In both of their claws were frogs. Stubbytail turned to Fireheart, then to Russetfur. "Might as well hunt on the way." the

brown tabby said. Russetfur gave him a nod in assurance and signaled Wetfoot and Boulder to do the same.

Russetfur looked at Fireheart. "Do you know how to catch our prey?" the reddish she-cat asked. Fireheart shook his head and said, "This is all new to me. There are many things I need to learn." Russetfur nodded slowly. Blackfoot interrupted, "how close are we?" Russetfur looked at her former deputy, "Very." As she spoke, Stubbytail, Snag, and the ShadowClan warriors came back holding frogs, lizards, a blackbird, and a squirrel. Russetfur seemed impressed.

"This way." Boulder said while carrying the blackbird. The cats followed the gray warrior to their camp. Rowanberry was quickly spotted by Fireheart, as did Runningnose. The sickly medicine cat flicked one of his ears towards the leader's den. Fireheart nodded and went into Nightstar's den.

Nightstar laid in his nest, only noticing Fireheart after a few heartbeats. "Ah, Fireheart." the leader spoke, "I apologize for how I spoke to you." Nightstar looked behind the ginger tom. "Hello, Runningnose." the black tom spoke. Runningnose nodded at his leader. "So," Fireheart spoke awkwardly, "are the rogues joining ShadowClan?"

Nightstar and Runningnose nodded. "As of you." Runningnose said. Fireheart almost seemed thrilled. Then, he thought about ThunderClan. Fireheart looked at the ShadowClan cats and said, "I don't truly know where my loyalty still lies. I feel like a part of me still lies in ThunderClan."

"Well, until you figure that out," Nightstar spoke, "you can stay in ShadowClan." Fireheart nodded in thanks before leaving the leader's den. He looked around the ShadowClan camp and sighed. He had to relearn how to be a warrior. Fireheart prayed to StarClan to find out where his loyalties lie.

Chapter 17

A yowl woke Fireheart up. He looked around in the ShadowClan warriors den. Fireheart seemed to be the last one to get up. It had been a few days since Nightstar let the rogues and him joined ShadowClan. Fireheart sighed. He has been sleeping terribly. The last few nights he stayed in ShadowClan, an uneasy feeling made him feel uncomfortable. He hadn't even seen Nightstar since Fireheart first came.

Fireheart's thoughts were interrupted by another yowl from outside then rustling from the den entrance. The face of Snag peered through and gave shocking news, "Nightstar's dead."

Fireheart sprang from his nest and followed Snag outside. Every ShadowClan warrior and apprentice looked confused and upset. Fireheart heard a cat say, "He has nine lives, he should have come back from now." Another cat behind them said, "He's not coming back. His sickness was too much." Fireheart's stomach turned. Was Nightstar really dead?

Fireheart looked at the leader's den. Runningnose sat in front of Nightstar's den, the gray and white tom's eyes darker than the night sky. Fireheart knew the medicine cat was in no shape to order the cats. The fiery tom looked around. No one was jumping into leadership. Fireheart sighed. What would Bluestar do?

Fear filled the fiery tom. *Oh Bluestar. Help me.* The familiar scent of Bluestar and Spottedleaf suddenly filled his nose. *"You know what to do."* Bluestar whispered to him. Fireheart shook. *I don't know how. "We will help you."* Spottedleaf said, *"Now go. Lead this Clan."*

Fireheart turned to the elders, suddenly filled with hope. "Bring out Nightstar's body." The elders hesitated. Fireheart felt a bit frustrated. "Your clan leader is dead. Do you want to honor him?" One of the elders nodded and padded towards Runningnose, where the medicine cat let him in.

Fireheart followed the elder and met up with Runningnose. "So you've decided to lead my clan?" the sickly medicine cat spoke. He seemed exhausted and lost the will to help ShadowClan. Fireheart sighed, "I feel like I have no choice. You took care of this clan through Brokentail's leadership and that awful sickness that took Nightstar's lives."

Runningnose quickly whispered, "But Nightstar never-." The medicine cat was interrupted by the elder bringing Nightstar's thin, unmoving body from his den. The elder gave Fireheart a sharp look before continuing to the clearing. Once the elder was out of earshot, Fireheart turned and asked, "Nightstar never what?"

Runningnose looked at his paws. "He never got his nine lives from StarClan." Fireheart was shocked. "Was it because Brokentail was still alive?" the fiery tom asked. Runningnose gave Fireheart a concerned look, "I don't know. Maybe. They weren't clear when we tried getting his lives. And he was too sick to drag him back there." Fireheart nodded, "I understand."

He looked around at ShadowClan. Fireheart continued, "And I assume no one else knows." The medicine cat shook his head. As Fireheart was about to jump onto ShadowClan's highrock, Runningnose quickly spoke, "Fireheart. No one, not even anyone in ShadowClan, must know." Fireheart saw the panic in the medicine cat's eyes. Fireheart knew this could ruin Nightstar's, and maybe even StarClan's, respect. "No worries, Runningnose," Fireheart said "it's safe with me." Runningnose's panicked eyes quickly filled with respect.

"You are a remarkable cat." Runningnose said, "No wonder Bluestar let you join ThunderClan. You are a true warrior at heart, despite your kittypet roots. Good luck to you." Fireheart was surprised at Runningnose's words. The ginger tom could only nod. Fireheart hopped on top of the Clanrock. Nervousness rushed through his pelt. ShadowClan might feel offended if he spoke on the rock. "StarClan," Fireheart prayed aloud, "guide my paws."

Chapter 18

"Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey join here beneath the Clanrock for a meeting!" Fireheart resisted what Nightstar said when he called his clan. The ShadowClan cats came out of the dens and looked at Fireheart. The fiery tom tried to hide his nervousness. "Let us honor Nightstar. Let his journey to StarClan be calm." Every cat fell silent for a couple of heartbeats. Runningnose walked up to his leader's dead body and began to do the burial ceremony.

Fireheart hopped down from the rock and looked around at the cats. He spotted Stubbytail, Snag, Mowgli, and a healing Blackfoot at the edge of camp, clearly feeling unwelcomed. Russetfur seemed to notice too, because she signaled her tail for them to join her. Fireheart felt a bit of relief. The fiery tom let the clan grief until sunhigh, where he promptly nodded at an elder.

The elder turned to his clanmates and spoke in a low whisper before grabbing Nightstar. The other elders followed, along with some others who knew Nightstar. After a while, the burial party came back, seemingly looking lost without their leader. Fireheart looked at Runningnose. The medicine cat was the only highly ranked cat left, since Nightstar never made a deputy after Cinderfur died.

Runningnose only looked at his paws. Fireheart felt frustrated. Then an idea filled the tom's head. "Blackfoot." Fireheart turned the the former deputy. Blackfoot looked at Fireheart. "Set up hunting and border patrols. ThunderClan might be curious why we haven't marked the border yet." Fireheart told the white tom. Blackfoot looked surprise. "Why me? Why not a cat they trust?" the white tom asked.

"Whoever said we don't trust you?" Fireheart heard Rowanberry say. Fireheart looked at her in surprised. Rowanberry nodded at Fireheart before continuing, "You were our deputy once. You know how to lead the clan." Blackfoot seemed panicked, "But I betrayed

all of you. And I'm hurt."

"What does being hurt have to do anything about it?" Runningnose butted in, "Nightstar lead with a sickness that sent him to StarClan." Blackfoot looked at all the cats. "What about you, Fireheart?" the white tom asked, "You led when I was hurt." A hiss came from behind Fireheart. It was the elder who gave Fireheart the sharp look earlier. "You are asking a ThunderClan kittypet who kept Brokentail in his clan to lead our clan." the elder scorned.

"I was a kittypet, remember Archeye?" Russetfur hoarsely said. "Yeah," spoke Boulder, "And he said it wasn't his idea to keep Brokentail in ThunderClan." Fireheart was surprised that these cats were defending him. "Thanks," Fireheart said to the two warriors, "but Blackfoot should lead the clan. Not me. I don't know ShadowClan as well and I am a former warrior of ThunderClan. And I know they aren't trusted" Fireheart signaled to the rogues, "But these deserve a chance. And so does Blackfoot."

Murmurs of agreement. Runningnose turned to Blackfoot, "I recommend you not going on patrols, though. That wound of yours is still bad." Blackfoot nodded in understanding before jumping onto Clanrock.

"Warriors of ShadowClan," the white tom spoke stubbornly, "I will lead ShadowClan until Runningnose gets a sign from StarClan. Until then, let us, in the name of Nightstar and all of our ancestors, make this clan strong again. Now before we strengthen our clan, let us first Introduce two new warriors."

Blackfoot turned to Snag and Mowgli. "Come forward," Blackfoot told the rogues. They stepped forward. "I, Blackfoot, temporary leader of ShadowClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on these cats. They have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you as warriors in turn."

Blackfoot stopped to think, "Do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?" The rogues looked around. "I do." Mowgli said first. Snag followed suit, "I do."

Blackfoot rose his head, "Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior names. Snag, from this moment on you will be known as Jaggedtooth. StarClan honors your determination, and we welcome you as a full warrior of ShadowClan. Mowgli, from this moment on you will be known as Nightwhisper. StarClan honors your caringness, and we welcome you as a full warrior of ShadowClan."

Stubbytail and Fireheart cheered, "Nightwhisper! Jaggedtooth!" The rest of ShadowClan followed. Blackfoot quickly jumped down and started organizing patrols. "Russetfur," the white tom called, "you and Cedarpaw will show Fireheart around. And hunt while you're at it." Russetfur huffed. "Great. I now have two apprentices to keep an eye on." the she-cat joked. Fireheart couldn't help but laugh. Maybe he might feel like a ShadowClan warrior.

But a thought in his mind still lingered. What if he has to fight ThunderClan?

Chapter 19

"Time for some hunting." Russetfur said. A few days have passed since Nightstar had joined StarClan and the clan had been slowly getting better. Runningnose seemed more confident in healing his sickened clan and Fireheart started getting use to ShadowClan life.

The patrol of cats, consisting of Fireheart, Russetfur, Cedarpaw, and Wetfoot, headed straight to the Thunderpath. Suddenly, Russetfur stopped. The patrol followed. "Come and show yourself," Russetfur said, "I know your there."

Littlecloud, a ShadowClan cat who disappeared before Fireheart join popped out. "Russetfur," the small tabby said, seemingly out of breath, "I need help." Before he could finished, Littlecloud collapsed. Wetfoot and Cedarpaw panicked. Fireheart looked at the warrior's body. Bruises and claw marks were all across his body.

"Quick," Fireheart said, "support him. Let bring him back to camp." The cats followed his orders and quickly brought Littlecloud back. Cedarpaw quickly ran to Runningnose's den and brought the medicine cat out. Blackfoot was close behind. "What happened?" the white tom asked.

"We found him close to the Thunderpath." Russetfur spoke, "He smells of ThunderClan." Blackfoot looked at Fireheart and hissed, "What did this to him?"

Fireheart went over to the tabby and tried to find a scent. He was shocked to find Cinderpelt's scent. But the scent of herbs cleared any suspicion of the medicine cat hurting the warrior. Fireheart took another sniff. He found another scent of other ThunderClan cats, and a faint scent of ShadowClan. "Tigerstar and Darkstripe." Fireheart looked at ShadowClan and asked, "Is any cat missing from your clan?"

"Whitethroat went missing about when Littlecloud left too." Boulder stated, "Why so you ask?" Fireheart signaled his tail for the warrior

to scent the tom. "That's Whitethroat alright." As the gray tom spoke, Littlecloud slowly became conscious. "W-Where am I?" the tabby asked.

"ShadowClan." Fireheart spoke. Littlecloud seemed shocked. "Don't mind me asking," Fireheart said, "but what happened to you?" Littlecloud seemed dumbfounded. "Well." the brown tabby started, "Whitethroat and I got the sickness. Runningnose had already exhausted his supplies, so we decided to ask for ThunderClan's help. Tigerstar rejected us when Yellowfang mentioned how badly the sickness was. As we were leaving the territory, Cinderpelt told us she would try and help us."

Littlecloud stopped. Fireheart felt sickened with worry. Would Tigerstar hurt Cinderpelt? Littlecloud continued, "Cinderpelt told us she was washing away our scent in a small stream nearby. while Cinderpelt was away, Whitethroat and I did the same, in case we were found out and get Cinderpelt in trouble. We found a stream and cleaned her scent off."

"You were caught by a patrol, weren't you?" Russetfur asked. Littlecloud nodded, "I only escaped because Cinderpelt showed me a way back to the Thunderpath."

"Did any cat know who you were?" Fireheart asked. Littlecloud shook his head. "I was hiding in some bushes when they got Whitethroat. I was pinned by a dark gray tabby but he was called away. That's when I ran for it."

Fireheart still didn't feel like Cinderpelt. "What about Cinderpelt?" the fiery tom begged to ask. Littlecloud looked at Fireheart. "She is fine." the brown tabby said, "before I left, I overheard the parol talk about her strong loyalty in ThunderClan and how she made sure no warrior got our sickness. She wouldn't be chased out if Tigerstar tried." Fireheart felt relief wash over him.

"What happened to Whitethroat?" Rowanberry asked. Littlecloud looked at his paws. Fireheart understood. "He didn't make it." the fiery said. Runningnose finally showed up and brought Littlecloud to the medicine den. Blackfoot jumped onto clanrock. "Cats of ShadowClan," the white tom stated, "Whitethroat's death may be a

shock, but let that not stop us. We are strong."

Blackfoot was interrupted by Applefur bursting into camp. "ThunderClan is hunting in our territory."

Chapter 20

Fireheart looked a Applefur, then at ShadowClan. Was it true? An uncomfortable feeling swept over Fireheart. If ThunderClan started to hunt in ShadowClan territory, that means Tigerstar is planning on taking the territory. That means ShadowClan has to act fast.

"What happened, Applefur?" Blackfoot asked. The brown she-cat panted, "I was hunting alone to get some fresh air. I was heading for the Thunderpath when I sented ThunderClan and prey being hunted."

Some of ShadowClan seemed skeptical. "It may have just been Fireheart," Flintfang said, "or Littlecloud, since Littlecloud sought out help from them." Applefur quickly faced the light gray tom, "Fireheart hadn't kept his ThunderClan scent since he and the rogues joined us. And I am very positively certain it was not Littlecloud."

Blackfoot stood in silence for a moment, then spoke, "If what you say is true, than we have to chase them out." The white tom turned to Russetfur. "gather a battle patrol. ThunderClan won't leave ShadowClan territory without a fight." The red she-cat nodded at the tom, "how many patrols?"

"Two." Blackfoot said, "and I will be leading one." The she-cat quickly nodded and followed his orders. Fireheart could see Littlecloud walking out of the medicine den and up to Blackfoot and asked him to not assign him a patrol. "Of course." Blackfoot said, "Why not?" The tabby awkward looked at his paws, "Well, I didn't want to join because I have decided to be Runningnose's apprentice."

Blackfoot seemed surprised, but said, "If that's what you want to do. I'm not stopping you." Littlecloud nodded in thanks and quickly went to help Runningnose. Fireheart couldn't help but feel optimistic for Littlecloud.

Blackfoot seemed to realize Fireheart overheard their conversation and padded over to him. "Why don't you do something useful and go hunting. We don't want you to get in our way and I don't believe you had a chance to catch anything."

Fireheart wasn't sure if Blackfoot was being considerate or just sending him hunting, but Fireheart was happy he wouldn't face his former clanmates. "Am I hunting alone?" Fireheart asked. Blackfoot nodded. "We need every healthy cat we can. And I know you will not hurt your former clanmates. You don't want to get in our way."

"Say no more, Blackfoot." Fireheart said, "I will do my best." Blackfoot turned and lead his battle patrol. An empty feeling filled Fireheart. He felt torn between clans. Fireheart hoped he will never feel this much heartache, but he knew what he was getting into. Fireheart sighed. One day, ThunderClan won't see him the same way.

Chapter 21

Fireheart went as far as possible from the the Thunderpath. He didn't want to be seen, just in case one of the sides see him and blame him for being an enemy from either clan, but gradually moved towards the monster-ridden area. Fireheart found it quite calming hunting.

During his hunt, Fireheart had caught a blackbird, two frogs, a couple squirrels, and a thrush. As he turned to grab his kills, a painful hiss filled the air. Fireheart immediately ran towards the hiss to see Oakpaw pinned by Darkstripe. "Help me!" the apprentice cried out. Fireheart wasn't sure if he wanted to help. Knowing Darkstripe, he would probably spread rumors that Fireheart was conspiring with Brokentail before the battle. Fireheart ultimately decided that he had to at least try.

"Let go of him, Darkstripe," Fireheart said coldly. A growl came from the dark tabby's throat before giving the fiery tom a glare. "I thought I recognized your voice, kittypet " Darkstripe scorned. Fireheart twitched his tail. He hated being called a kittypet,but knew he couldn't let it bother him.

"I said let the apprentice go," Fireheart growled, "fight someone your own size." Darkstripe laughed, "Who, You? Leave, kittypet, and I'll let you go without a scratch and leave me with this apprentice. " Fireheart knew he couldn't do that. Fireheart had to think of a way to provoke the dark warrior. "After many moons of following Tigerstar, after he didn't make you deputy, you really think hurting an apprentice would impress him. How petty of you."

Darkstripe growled and raised his haunches. Fireheart quickly gave Oakpaw a nod, showing the apprentice to prepare to help him fight. Oakpaw seemed to understand. Darkstripe let out a hiss in frustration, "You are not a true warrior."

"Neither are yo-" Fireheart didn't finish. Darkstripe caterwauled and threw himself onto Fireheart. Fireheart unsheathed his claws and

threw Darkstripe to the ground. The dark tabby seemed shocked, but turned to swipe at Fireheart. Before Darkstripe could do anything, however, Oakpaw threw himself at the ThunderClan warrior.

Together, Oakpaw and Fireheart slowly forced Darkstripe back towards the Thunderpath. Fireheart could see in the corner of his eye the patrol of ThunderClan and ShadowClan cats. ShadowClan seemed to be winning, because Fireheart could see what he could make out as Dustpelt being chased out by Russetfur.

"You are fighting on the wrong side, Fireheart," Darkstripe spoke, "Tigerstar is a great leader." Fireheart twitched his tail, "That's odd, coming from you. He didn't make you deputy." Darkstripe twitched his ears, "he will regret that one day. But what do you think Tigerstar would do if he found out you joined ShadowClan?"

"Tell me, Darkstripe," Fireheart said threateningly, "Why would Tigerstar risk a fight just for prey?" Darkstripe stepped back as Stubbytail and Rowanberry joined Fireheart and Oakpaw. Darkstripe growled lowly, "Why would I tell you?"

The ShadowClan cats stepped forward, forcing the dark tabby to step closer to the Thunderpath. "You know Tigerstar tried to kill me and Ravenpaw. I know he's planning something. Tell us, and we will let you go."

Darkstripe hissed as ShadowClan wedged him closer. At this point, Darkstripe was within a whisker of getting hit by a monster. "Just tell us and we will let you go." Fireheart slowly spoke. Darkstripe seemed to be conflicted. The dark tabby tried to make a run for it across the Thunderpath, but a monster cut him off.

Darkstripe hissed in frustration, then turned to Fireheart. "You better watch your back, kittypet. Be careful where you put your loyalty. No matter what your doing, ThunderClan will forever haunt you." As a monster roared passed, Darkstripe threw himself onto the dark flooring. A loud thud, followed by a gasp by the ShadowClan cats, filled the air.

A voice of Willowpelt cried out, "Darkstripe!" Fireheart couldn't

look at his former clanmate. He felt stiff with fear and dread. Fireheart could hear a hiss from Willowpelt. "How could you, Fireheart?" the gray she-cat asked, "He was your clanmate."

Fireheart forced himself to look at Willowpelt. "I'm just as shocked as you. But I didn't cause this. He knew what he was doing." Willowpelt unsheathed her claws, but Rowanberry stepped in front of the upset warrior. "You really think Fireheart of all cats would forced him to jump?" the brown and cream warrior asked.

Willowpelt looked at her paws. "I am really sorry." Fireheart said, "I didn't think he of all cats would do something so mousebrain." Willowpelt seemed to understand. She slowly and carefully walked over to Darkstripe's body and grabbed the dark tabby's scuff and pulled him to the ThunderClan side of the Thunderpath.

Before crossing, Willowpelt looked at Fireheart and spoke, "I hope you know what you're doing, Fireheart. I know this was an accident, but what should I tell ThunderClan?"

"Say what you want." Fireheart spoke, "ThunderClan can handle whatever you say." Willowpelt nodded and grabbed Darkstripe. "Goodbye Fireheart." Willowpelt spoke. "I hope to see you at the Gathering one day."

Fireheart felt longing as Willowpelt dragged Darkstripe to ThunderClan territory. There was no turning back now. Fireheart had to stay in ShadowClan.

Chapter 22

Fireheart, Oakpaw, and Rowanberry brought back the prey Fireheart caught, and some prey that was caught on the way back. Fireheart could tell, however, Oakpaw was distracted. Once the cats came to ShadowClan, Fireheart pulled Oakpaw aside.

"You ok?" Fireheart asked. Oakpaw nodded. "Why would he do that?" the apprentice asked. Fireheart sighed. He didn't know what to say to the apprentice. Wetfoot stepped aside Fireheart.

"Sometimes, cats do crazy things without thinking about consequences." the gray warrior spoke sincerely. Wetfoot gave Fireheart a nod and ushered his apprentice out of camp, presumably to talk about it.

Fireheart felt relieved. He didn't want to say the wrong thing. Fireheart sighed and walked around camp. He stopped as he heard groans in the medicine den. Fireheart could tell something was really wrong.

As the fiery tom stood there, Runningnose quickly poked his head out. "Fireheart, come in," the sickly tom concernedly said, "Blackfoot asked for you." Fireheart looked at the medicine cat confused. "Blackfoot asked for me?" Fireheart had so many questions, "Why?"

Runningnose shrugged, "He just asked for you. And Russetfur if I can find her." Russetfur seemed to hear her name, because she brushed passed a few warriors to talk to Runningnose. "You called for me?" she asked.

"Blackfoot asked for you and Fireheart." Runningnose said, "I'll be back. I'm collecting herbs. Blackfoot reopened his neck wound while fighting and might need some more treatment." Fireheart could tell Runningnose seemed nervous. Fireheart knew why. ShadowClan would lose two clan leaders within a half-moon of each other.

Fireheart followed Russetfur into the medicine den. There, Littlecloud was dressing Blackfoot's neck wound. "How is he?" Fireheart asked. Littlecloud sighed. "His neck wound seems worse than before he fought. And it might get really infected. Fireheart understood how serious this was.

"Don't worry them, Littlecloud." Blackfoot said, trying to sound commanding. As the white tom finished, he winced. "You sure your fine?" Russetfur asked concerningly. Blackfoot sighed. "I want to ask you two something." Both Fireheart and Russetfur nodded. Blackfoot looked at both of them and said, "I want the two of you to lead this clan in my absence."

Fireheart and Russetfur looked at each other. Fireheart never led a full clan before and Russetfur seemed concerned. "Your absence? What do you mean?" Russetfur asked. Littlecloud turned to the others and said, "He's going to have to stay in here for a while."

Fireheart felt slightly nervous. "Come on Fireheart," Russetfur said, "You're a ShadowClan cat now. You proved that earlier while helping Oakpaw." Fireheart looked at the ShadowClan she-cat. "But I'm not a leader."

"You are much like a leader when I was hurt the first time." Blackfoot said. Fireheart seemed surprised. When he first joined Blackfoot's group outside of ThunderClan territory, Blackfoot was frustrated with Fireheart when the fiery tom took lead. "You really trust me that much?" Fireheart asked.

"I wouldn't have let you stay with us otherwise." Blackfoot stated. Fireheart still felt conflicted. "What about the clan?" Fireheart asked, "They don't trust me."

"You chased out Brokenstar, brought our clanmates back, and saved Oakpaw," Littlecloud pointed out. "And," Russetfur chimed in, "you're not the only cat temporary lead, remember?" Russetfur turned to leave the medicine den, "no cat can argue with your loyalty, Fireheart. All you have to do is not screw up badly."

Fireheart looked at his paws. It didn't feel right. As Fireheart stood up and turned to leave, Blackfoot ominously said, "good luck,

Fireheart."

Chapter 23

Fireheart felt uneasy as he laid in his nest. It's already been two days and it was tough. Blackfoot hadn't gotten any better and Fireheart worried ShadowClan would lose another leader. The sun hasn't even set yet, but it felt like a long, dry day. Fireheart knew he couldn't sleep, so he stood up from his nest and headed towards the camp exit. A sudden call of his name made the fiery tom turn around.

Runningnose and Littlecloud were heading right for him. Fireheart was surprised to see both of the medicine cats wanting to join him. As they caught up, Fireheart asked, "What about Blackfoot?" Runningnose answered, "I gave him a poppy seed and cleaned his wound. I have a few warriors keeping an eye on him."

"Where to?" Fireheart asked. "Near the Thunderpath." Littlecloud answered, "There are some herbs we need to find." Fireheart nodded and let the two cats take the lead, Fireheart keeping an eye on the border.

As the medicine cats searched for herbs to store, Fireheart made his way to where ThunderClan tried to hunt. Luckily, no ThunderClan scent was recent. Fireheart felt satisfied, though he was unsure if it was from not wanting to fight more of his former clanmates or from loyalty to ShadowClan.

Fireheart shook his head and made his way back to the medicine cats. Both of them were carrying large bundles of herbs, which seemed to please Runningnose. The three cats made their way back. On their way, Wetfoot, with a patrol behind him, brushed passed them.

"Good herb finding, rabbit heart?" Wetfoot joked. "Of course, fox eater." Fireheart joked back. Wetfoot laughed and led his patrol for hunting. Fireheart felt happy warriors began to trust him, though not without Russetfur and Stubbytail's help.

The three ShadowClan cats made their way to camp. By the time they got organized, Fireheart felt ready to sleep.

Fireheart woke up, though he didn't know why. The sky seemed darker and the air felt thick. Fireheart quicky left the den to see the sky covered in smoke. The ShadowClan warriors seemed frantic. Wetfoot suddenly burst through the camp entrance with his patrol. "There is a fire in ThunderClan territory."

Chapter 24

Fireheart quickly made his way to the Thunderpath. The sky was dark from ash and soot. Fireheart didn't care. He turned behind him. No ShadowClan cat seemed to follow him. Fireheart sighed. He knew no ShadowClan cat cared for ThunderClan.

Fireheart quickly cross the border, staying as stealthy as possible. He knew it was going to be hard to see, so Fireheart closed his eyes and retraced his steps to ThunderClan. Once he got to the ThunderClan camp, fire seemed to almost surround it. In the distance, on a burning tree, Fireheart could see Bramblekit, Tigerstar's son.

Not far from the tree, Longtail and Goldenflower frantically searched. Fireheart made himself known. Longtail unsheathed his claws at the sight of the fiery tom, but Goldenflower pushed him away. Fireheart quickly touched noses with the queen before jumping onto the tree to grab Bramblekit.

Fireheart could see in the corner of his eye Longtail grabbing Halftail from the elder's den. Goldenflower seemed to hold another cat, probably Patchpelt. As Fireheart grabbed Bramblekit, a sudden crack filled the air. Fireheart jumped down the tree with Bramblekit in his jaws and gave him to his mother.

Fireheart looked up and saw a flaming branch, just above the elder's den. Longtail didn't seem to notice. Another sound of the cracking tree made Longtail flinch and look up. Fireheart was quick to grab Longtail as the branch fell. The flaming branch barely missed Longtail. The pale tabby was shocked by how close he was to being trapped to a fiery death.

Longtail took the lead as Goldenflower grabbed her kit and Fireheart dragged Patchpelt. As Fireheart realized Longtail led the cats to Sunningrocks, scared murmurs could be heard. Happy murmur seemed to fill the air as Longtail and Goldenflower went through the brush. Fireheart sighed as he went through the bushes.

A sudden shocked went around as Fireheart showed himself, dragging Patchpelt. Cinderpelt was the first to greet the fiery tom. Fireheart felt happy to see his former apprentice. He looked around at the other cats. Tigerstar laid on the sandy beach with burn marks and breathing shallow. Yellowfang sat next to him, looking worried.

"He inhaled a lot of smoke." Cinderpelt said, "He went after Speckletail and her kits as the fire hit. A branch fell on him." Fireheart nodded. He turned and padded towards Yellowfang. He sat beside her and licked her cheek. Yellowfang seemed surprised to see Fireheart. Her surprise quickly left as she stood up. "Let me know if anything changes."

Fireheart looked at Tigerstar's burnt body. Fireheart knew Tigerstar couldn't hurt him in this state. "What do you want, Fireheart?" Tigerstar asked. "Do you want to kill me with a clan like this?" This question was followed by a cough. Fireheart knew he couldn't hurt Tigerstar like this, so he said, "I don't know why StarClan let you be leader or gave you nine lives, but I want nothing except to help ThunderClan."

As he said that, Fireheart spotted a patrol of RiverClan swimming across the river. The patrol consisted of Mistyfoot, Leopardfur, Stonefur, Shadepelt and an apprentice Fireheart didn't know. Fireheart quickly touched noses with Mistyfoot. "Help them get across." Fireheart said to the RiverClan patrol. Stonefur nodded and waved his tail ro a waiting patrol across the river. Fireheart could see Graystripe leading another patrol across the river.

Fireheart turned to Longtail. "Get the injured, queens and their kits, and elders to wait at the river." Longtail quickly followed his order as the many ThunderClan lives depended on it. Fireheart ran to Graystripe as the gray tom made it across. "How did you manage to convince RiverClan to help?"

Graystripe nodded, "It wasn't me. Once smoke filled the air, Graypool spoke up first." Before Fireheart could respond, Longtail came into view. "Patchpelt's dead." Fireheart felt pity. He remembered so much from the elder. He had so many stories to tell. Fireheart briefly said his goodbye to the elder before helping cats across.

By now, Tigerstar was strong enough to stand and lead his clan. Fireheart was more than happy to let ThunderClan's leader lead. The dark tabby, once done ordering cats to follow RiverClan, turned to Fireheart. "Don't you have somewhere to be?" Fireheart went and faced Tigerstar. "I want to see them safe first. Then, I will stay out of your fur. For now."

Tigerstar narrowed his eyes. The dark tabby knew Fireheart knew his dirty secret. The leader turned and followed his clanmates. Fireheart went over to Patchpelt's limp body. Graystripe sat next to the fiery tom. "Let's bring him over." the gray tom said. Fireheart nodded and grabbed the elder's body. Graystripe followed and grabbed the other end. Together, they dragged the elder across the river.

As Graystripe and some ThunderClan cats prepared for Patchpelt's vigil, Fireheart looked across the river. The fire could be seen blazing through the forest. A raindrop dripped on Fireheart. A storm was coming. Fireheart sighed as the rain fell. A feeling of dread filled him as he looked at his former clanmates. What is he to do to help them?

Chapter 25

Crookedstar and Tigerstar spoke silently as both clans huddled under bushes to hide from the rain. Cats murmured amongst themselves as Fireheart groomed his wet fur. He didn't know what to do first. As he looked around, Graystripe padded up to him. The two touched noses.

"I want you to meet my kits." Graystripe quickly said. Fireheart followed the gray tom as he excitedly led the way to the nursery. Two kits immediately swarmed Graystripe's legs. One of the kits, the silver she-kit, spotted Fireheart and immediately asked, "Who are you? I've never seen you before. Are you from ThunderClan? How long have you been a warrior?"

"Alright, that's enough." Fireheart heard Mosspelt say as she came out of the den, "Come inside before you catch a cold." The two kits lowered their tails as they followed their foster mother back inside the nursery. Graystripe looked at Fireheart. "They have grown since I saw them last." Fireheart tried to say excitedly.

"Haven't they?" Graystripe excitedly said, seemingly not noticing Fireheart's tone, "They are so much like their mother." Before Fireheart could respond, someone called his name. He turned to see Whitestorm, Stonefur, and Mistyfoot were seen chatting. Fireheart and Graystripe made their way to them. "Hello Fireheart. Graystripe." Whitestorm said as he nodded to the both of them.

"Hello, Whitestorm," Graystripe awkwardly replied. Fireheart knew how it felt confronting former clanmates. Whitestorm asked in a polite manner, "How are your kits?" Graystripe perked, "They are wonderful. They are getting bigger each day." Graystripe looked at his paws. Seeing ThunderClan took a heavier tole on Graystripe than when Fireheart first saw Whitestorm moons ago.

Whitestorm seemed to notice because he turned to Fireheart and said, "So you're in ShadowClan now." Fireheart could feel Graystripe staring at him in shock. "ShadowClan?" Graystripe asked, "Are you

mousebrained?"

Fireheart turned to Graystripe and said, "I am not mousebrained. A sickness from the carrionplace swept through ShadowClan and killing many cats. I am helping them get strong again." Graystripe fell silent. Whitestorm didn't seem to care, nor did Stonefur and Mistyfoot.

"As long as no cats are killed from your paws." Stonefur said. Mistyfoot agreed. "How is ShadowClan?" Graystripe asked. Fireheart looked at his paws. He didn't know what to tell them. Before he could say anything, Yellowfang called Fireheart over. The gray medicine cat sat him down in a few bushes making sure no one was within earshot.

Fireheart felt more comfortable talking to Yellowfang about ShadowClan. "So you're in ShadowClan now, are you not?" she asked. Fireheart nodded. "How is Nightstar and his leadership? And what about you? Are you doing alright?" Yellowfang asked. Worry filled Fireheart as he told Yellowfang everything, from him witnessing Tigerstar kill Bluestar, to Nightstar's mysterious death, to Blackfoot ominously talking about his absence and Fireheart's new leadership role.

"I don't know what to do." Fireheart said, "I feel so conflicted. What if-" Yellowfang cut Fireheart off, "Never ask what if. That would only make things worse." Fireheart looked at the fiery tempered she-cat. He knew she had her regrets and obstacles while in ShadowClan. He listened to her advice as Yellowfang continued, "This is all knew to you. But remember, you adjusted to clan life before, what makes this so different?"

Fireheart sighed, "I had you and Bluestar to help me." Yellowfang perked in amusement. Fireheart smiled solemnly as he continued "I know Bluestar would guide my paws. And you in my head to nag me for doing something mousebrained." Yellowfang seemed pleased with Fireheart's answer.

Fireheart laid his head on Yellowfang's shoulder. She did the same. "Thank you, Yellowfang." Fireheart said, "I hope to see you at the next Gathering." Yellowfang sighed, "I wish I bore a son like you,

Fireheart. You are a nice and confident cat." Fireheart felt moved by her words. She laughed and said, "It's funny. You brought me into ThunderClan. And now that I have been accepted in ThunderClan, and now that I am accepted fully, it's you who is helping my former clan."

Before he could respond, Fireheart saw Cedarpaw, Russetfur's apprentice. He was speaking frantically to Fireheart, "Blackfoot sent for you." the fear in the apprentice's eyes made Fireheart shiver. This may be the end of the white warrior. Fireheart shook his head. It can't be. "Fireheart, please. He's weak and may not last the night." Cedarpaw said.

Fireheart looked at Yellowfang. Fireheart's suspicions were right. She seemed to come to the same conclusion. She gave him a nod and Fireheart sprang to run with Cedarpaw back to ShadowClan. Fireheart went through fourtrees to ShadowClan territory. The fiery tom slowed down to led Cedarpaw catch his breath. "I'm fine," the apprentice huffed, "I've just never run do much."

The two toms continued with a quick and steady pace. The rain started up again as they made it back to camp. The horror filled Fireheart as he realized something. A large, white tom was in the clearing with warriors looking in grief. Fireheart was too late to say goodbye to the temporary leader. Blackfoot was dead.

Chapter 26

Days have passed since Blackfoot's passing. Fireheart and Russetfur continued to lead ShadowClan, but the clan doesn't feel the same. StarClan still haven't given Runningnose a sign and every cat feels restless. It wasn't like Runningnose, or even Littlecloud, weren't trying. The medicine cats have been searching endlessly for a sign or omen around the territory. Fireheart shivered. The Gathering was this coming night, which made Runningnose act nervous. Fireheart seemed to understand. Without a proper leader or deputy, Runningnose had to lead ShadowClan.

Fireheart came up to the medicine cat as he walked by. "Shall I get a Gathering patrol?" Fireheart asked. Runningnose seemed to be relieved as he said, "That will be helpful." Fireheart nodded and jumped onto Clanrock. "ShadowClan," Fireheart said, "the Gathering is tonight. Therefore, must have a Gathering patrol." Fireheart stopped for a moment before choosing, "Russetfur, Cedarpaw, Wetfoot, Nightwhisper, Oakpaw, Archeye, Flintfang, Runningnose, and myself. Eat and rest. We leave before sunfall."

All the gathering patrol did as Fireheart said except for Runningnose, who paced in front of Clanrock. Fireheart jumped down to talk to him. Fireheart knew Runningnose may get asked how Nightstar died with all of his lives he never got. "You ok?" Fireheart asked. Runningnose shook his head. "What do I say about Nightstar? What if they find out he never received his lives?"

Fireheart interrupted him and remembered what Yellowfang told him. "Never ask what if. That would only make things worse." Fireheart repeated Yellowfang. Runningnose took in a deep breath. The sickly tom looked relieved as he exhaled. "Now," Fireheart said, "the clans will be asking."

"I'll just say the Carrionplace sickness was most brutal to him." Runningnose said, though he didn't seem convinced. Fireheart sighed. If Runningnose didn't sound convinced, the other clans will get suspicious. "I can't say you will look at me like I'm crazy,"

Fireheart said, "but what would Brokentail say? How would he say it?"

Runningnose's fur bristled but nodded. "That is a crazy thought," the medicine cat said, "but you're right. Trying to think like a leader instead of a medicine cat will make us look strong." Runningnose looked really confident. "Get some rest, Fireheart," Runningnose said confidentially, "We're going to the Gathering."

The patrol made it to Fourtrees before any other clan, though, Fireheart could tell RiverClan was not far behind. Fireheart felt a nervous excitement fill him. This was his first Gathering since joining ShadowClan. A tap on Fireheart's shoulder made him jump. It was, however, Graystripe.

"Does it feel like we're reliving our first Gathering?" Graystripe asked. Fireheart nodded, unable to speak. Fireheart then turned to see WindClan coming into the clearing. Fireheart quickly touched noses with Tallstar. "Did you do as StarClan asked." Fireheart nodded and spoke, "Yes indeed. Though, I'm not sure how ThunderClan, or the rest of your clan, will react."

"Wise words, Fireheart." the WindClan leader said as he made his way towards the Great Rock. Crookedstar was already there, talking with Runningnose. Fireheart was about to sit with Onewhisker, until ThunderClan entered the clearing. Tigerstar immediately went to the Great Rock as his clanmates spread out. Yellowfang walked over to Fireheart and said, "You kept your promise." Fireheart touched noses with Yellowfang before Tallstar called the meeting.

Tigerstar began, "A fire had quickly spread through ThunderClan territory. Thanks to RiverClan help, our clan still lives. However, Halftail and Patchpelt had died from the smoke. I may also like to thank Fireheart. He was willing to go through the fire, not only saving a kit from a burning tree, but also saving my deputy, Longtail." Fireheart was very surprised. Why would his enemy declare him a hero? Did Tigerstar want ShadowClan to throw him out for helping ThunderClan? Or just to confuse Fireheart?

Tigerstar stepped back as Crookedstar stepped forward. "Do to the fire in ThunderClan, I have offered ThunderClan Sunningrocks."

Tigerstar nodded in thanks. Crookedstar continued, "No major news in RiverClan." Tallstar stepped forward and talked about kits and new warriors. It was finally time for Runningnose to step up.

"Around a half moon ago, one of our cats went to hunt a rat in the Carrionplace. That rat had a sickness that spread throughout our clan. It had killed Nightstar's deputy, Cinderfur. Before Nightstar could announce a new deputy, the sickness had gotten to him. He died, taking everything with him. I am looking for a sign from StarClan for our next leader. But for now we are leaderless." Many cats gasped. Runningnose signaled his tail for silence. Fireheart was surprised and impressed how leader-like he was.

Runningnose continued as cats fell, "before Nightstar died, he let Brokentail's rogues, as well as Fireheart of ThunderClan, has join to strengthen ShadowClan after the sickness. We are not week in any way." Runningnose made sure to say the last sentence with force. Fireheart was impressed with how bold the medicine cat was.

Runningnose continued, "A quarter moon ago, before the ThunderClan fire, ThunderClan entered our territory to hunt. One of the former rogues, Blackfoot, personally led a patrol to confront the trespassers. Now Tigerstar," Runningnose turned to the ThunderClan leader, "why would you send your warriors into your territory?"

Tigerstar was stunned, or at least seemed to be. Fireheart couldn't tell. Tigerstar stalled for a few heartbeats before saying, "I realize my mistake. I thought I could get away with it. I am sorry. I will not do it again." Many ShadowClan hissed. Not many trusted the dark tabby. Leopardfur suddenly turned to Runningnose and asked, "Why not have Blackfoot lead ShadowClan? He was deputy before being chased out."

Runningnose sighed and said, "Blackfoot died from an infected wound a few nights ago, opened after chasing out ThunderClan." Many cats were shocked. The way Runningnose put it, it seemed like ThunderClan was to blame for the warrior's death. Fireheart worried about a fight, but he was ready to do so. Before any cats could do anything, however, clouds covered the sky. The Gathering was over, but tensions were still high. Fireheart prayed to StarClan

that cats won't take it the wrong way. *Oh StarClan, don't let ThunderClan do something mousebrained these next moon or two.*

Chapter 27

Fireheart tossed in his sleep. He dreamed of Tigerstar looking over every clan, looking over with power glowing in his eyes. Fireheart woke up in fright. He knew Tigerstar was still a threat, but that terror shook him. Fireheart shook his head. He knew not to worry about it now. Fireheart quickly padded out of the warriors den.

As he left, Cedarpaw ran up to him. "Are we doing battle training with Oakpaw and Wetfoot today?" Fireheart nodded. Russetfur stepped on a large thorn while on the way back from the Gathering. Runningnose had her stay in camp for the day. Fireheart felt pity for her apprentice, so offered to do some training.

"Good morning, Fireheart." Wetfoot said as both Fireheart and Cedarpaw came to the entrance. Oakpaw and Cedarpaw seemed excited to have Fireheart come to their battle training. While the cats made their way to the training hollow, Oakpaw and Cedarpaw started asking, "Are you going to show us ThunderClan fighting moves?" "Are ThunderClan cats great fighters?" "How many battles and skirmishes have you been in?"

"That's enough questions." Wetfoot said annoyed. The apprentices fell silent. Fireheart felt slightly relieved. Wetfoot stopped at a fallen tree with a clearing. "We are here." Wetfoot said. The apprentices quickly bounded forward. Wetfoot huffed in annoyance before following his apprentice. Fireheart followed Wetfoot.

"Alright," Wetfoot said, "let's show him what we do." Oakpaw and Cedarpaw nodded at the warrior before circling each other. Fireheart made sure to comment, "keep your claws sheathed." Cedarpaw quickly slid his claws in. As soon as the apprentice did so, he sprang onto Oakpaw. Oakpaw was quick to duck, hitting Cedarpaw with his paws.

Cedarpaw landed and quickly attacked Oakpaw again. Oakpaw knocked Cedarpaw off balance and pinned him. Cedarpaw looked at Fireheart. Fireheart gave him the signal to relax and act defeated.

Cedarpaw did so. Oakpaw yowled in success. As the brown apprentice mocked Cedarpaw, Fireheart quickly said, "Now!" Cedarpaw used his stronger back legs and threw Oakpaw. Cedarpaw was quick to pin his training mate.

Oakpaw struggled under Cedarpaw's weight, but gave up quickly, saying, "Not fair. You cheated." Wetfoot laughed and said, "that's a fair move." Fireheart nodded at the warrior and said, "I learned that when I was younger than you. If you think you've won, chase them out, not gloat on your victory."

Wetfoot nodded and Cedarpaw let Oakpaw go. Oakpaw looked ready to fight Cedarpaw for embarrassing him. "Alright," Wetfoot stopped his apprentice, "Let's continue. ThunderClan may try to take some of our territory since their territory was on fire."

Fireheart and the training patrol started heading back to camp, but decided to hunt while on their way back. Fireheart was pleased how well the day went. He learned a few fighting tricks and caught plenty of prey. As they found their way back to camp, a lot of murmuring and gasps filled the camp.

The cats quickly entered. "Go eat." Fireheart said to the apprentices. They followed his order as Wetfoot and Fireheart broke through a crowd that formed in camp. Fireheart was surprised at what he saw. A little heart-shaped leaf had caught fire. However, it did not scorch any other leaf or stick. Fireheart quickly tried to put it out by getting grabbing moss full of water and put it on top of the fire.

After a few heartbeats of dabbing soaked moss on the fire, the flame didn't seem to die. As Fireheart stopped trying to put it out, his shadow looked over it. The ShadowClan cats gasped as Fireheart felt his stomach turn. As his shadow covered the flame, it slowly blew out, but the leaf was intact. The sound of loud thunder filled the air before dying out like the flame. Every warrior in camp fell quiet.

"It's a sign." Fireheart heard Stubbytail say. Fireheart was still in shock. He turned to Runningnose, who was just as shocked. After what felt like moons, Runningnose looked at the clan. "This is a sign from StarClan. A new leader, using his shadow to stop the fires of

his past. His loyalty in ThunderClan is now far behind him." the medicine cat said, "Fireheart will be the new leader of ShadowClan." Every cat in ShadowClan, still in shock, started chanting, "Fireheart! Fireheart!"

Fireheart shivered. Was this his destiny? To lead ShadowClan? He looked at the cats, their eyes loyally on him. Fireheart knew now he couldn't turn it down. Fireheart hopped onto Clanrock and said, "Thank you all. I may not have been born of any clan, nor raised in this one, but I promise you, I will not make the same mistakes Brokenstar had done. I will restore honor and strength to this clan. In StarClan's name, this clan will be strong again."

Cats cheered wholeheartedly. Fireheart looked at ShadowClan. They seemed thrilled to have a leader chosen by StarClan. Some seemed skeptical, but ultimately, no one stopped him from being leader. Fireheart jumped down from the rock and made his way to Runningnose. He looked nervous, but ready to head to the Moonstone. Fireheart turned to Russetfur, who's paw was much better and said, "send out hunting and border patrols. I recommend sending one to the ThunderClan border. We don't know what they're planning." Russetfur nodded and quickly ordered patrols. Fireheart quickly decided she will be his deputy.

Runningnose patiently waited as Fireheart turned to him. "Are you ready?" the medicine cat asked. Fireheart noticed how nervous Runningnose was and asked, "Are you?" Runningnose sighed. Fireheart knew Runningnose had a complicated history with StarClan and leaders. "Come on, Runningnose," Fireheart tried to motivate the medicine cat, "Would StarClan send you that sign if the hadn't chosen me?"

Runningnose seemed skeptical, but knew he had to go. "Ok, Fireheart," Runningnose said as optimistically as possible, "Let's go." Fireheart followed the medicine cat. A pinch of nervousness made Fireheart question what was happening. Was he really to be leader of ShadowClan?

Chapter 28

Fireheart and Runningnose silently entered Mothermoth. The ShadowClan cats hadn't been spotted in WindClan, which Fireheart was relieved. He didn't want to meet his allies. The night was half over when Fireheart spotted the Moonstone. He took a deep breath, as well as Runningnose. Both of them were nervous.

Runningnose touched noses with the stone. Fireheart followed, knowing he had to at least try to get his lives. He suddenly felt cold, the coldest he ever felt. Panic filled the fiery tom until he slowly drifted into darkness.

Fireheart opened his eyes. He was at Fourtrees. Fireheart had a familiar feeling. He knew he was in StarClan. He looked up at the sky to see nine pairs of starry eyes spiraled around his head. They stopped as their cat shapes took form. "Fireheart," the cats said in unison, "are you ready to receive your nine lives?" Fireheart felt relieved. He knew Runningnose felt the same.

"I am ready." Fireheart proudly said. Nightstar stepped forward, his yellow eyes glowed proudly. "Fireheart," the black tom said, "I am happy to give you something I never received when I was in your position." He rested his nose on Fireheart's head. "With this life, I give you the belief in StarClan. Even when bad things happen, or when dark times show themselves, know that StarClan is willing to help." A wave of pain scorched through Fireheart's body. Nightstar stepped back and Fireheart felt shocked. Was every life like this?

The gray pelt of Cinderfur crossed Fireheart's view. As began to Fireheart a life, Fireheart prepared himself. "With this life," Cinderfur said, "I give you acceptance. It is easy to forgive, but hard to accept. Use it wisely." The pain of the life came and went, and Fireheart was ready for the next one.

Cinderfur stepped back and Blackfoot took his place. Fireheart felt a small pinch of pity, but he knew Blackfoot will get use to StarClan. Blackfoot put his nose on Fireheart's head and said, "I give you the

life of strength to act without fear or judgement. Some are only following orders. Judge them accordingly." Fireheart felt his fear be washed away as his muscles tightened in pain. Relief came when Blackfoot stepped back.

It took Fireheart a heartbeat to recognize the next cat that stepped forward. He was a black tom with white on his chest and paws. Fireheart suddenly realized it was Whitethroat, the tom who Darkstripe had killed on ThunderClan territory. Whitethroat touched Fireheart's head and said, "With this life, I give you justice. Some have wronged others in these clans, and they need to justify for their actions."

Once Whitethroat was done, he stepped back. The cat who took Whitethroat's place was another cat he did not recognise. A dappled tortoiseshell tom with a red tail stood in front of him. "I am Redtail." the starry tom said, "Bluestar's deputy before Lionheart." Fireheart was shocked. This was the cat Tigerstar had killed the day he joined ThunderClan. "I am sorry Redtail." Fireheart said, "I didn't tell anyone what had happened to you."

Redtail stepped forward and proceeded to give Fireheart a life, saying, "I give you the life of truth. The truth may be sharper than claws, but helps a lasting peace. Use this to triumph against the wrong in the clans." This life hurt Fireheart a lot more than the others, but he knew any life would give him strength to fight against Tigerstar.

Redtail stepped back and broad shouldered, golden tabby tom stood in front of Fireheart. Fireheart instantly knew this cat to be Lionheart. Joy filled Fireheart's belly. Lionheart touched Fireheart's head and and said, "With this life, I give you courage. When dark times arise, courage will form to bring the light." This life burnt through Fireheart's pelt like fire in a forest. Once Lionheart finished, he stepped back.

A silver she-cat took his place. Fireheart knew this was Silverstream, Graystripe's lost love. She touched Fireheart's head and said, "I give you the life of Sympathy and Understanding. Use it to help those who are weak and in need of help." This life was slightly calmer than any of the other lives Fireheart had received.

Once Silverstream was done, she stepped back.

Fireheart was overjoyed with the next cat who stepped forward. Spottedleaf, with her beautiful pelt and sweet scent, stepped forward to give Fireheart a life. Spottedleaf put her nose on Fireheart's head and said, "My love, with this life, I give you Patience and Hope. Things may not go your way, but things take time." After Spottedleaf was done, Fireheart felt like he could wait for an answer forever. Then he thought to himself, _I have one more life. I can take it._

Fireheart looked at where Spottedleaf once stood. There, a young blue-gray she-cat stood before him. It took Fireheart a few heartbeats before realizing it was Bluestar. He was confused why it took him that long. He had seen her before in StarClan. How did he not notice her young appearance before.

Bluestar spoke firmly, "My apprentice, my warrior, the fire in ThunderClan. And now ShadowClan. I am so proud of you. And now, your ninth and final life." She rested her nose on Fireheart's head and said proudly, "With your final life, I give you War and Peace. Like a broken bones, war breaks cats, but peace makes them stronger. Use this life well." Fireheart gasped. Visions of battles from cats he had never seen. From kittypets fending off intruders in their gardens, to the many border scrimmages and an all out war at fourtrees. Fireheart felt every claw, but also every wound that healed and every peaceful time.

Bluestar stepped back. Nightstar yowled in the air, "I hail you by your new name, Firestar. Your old life is no more. You have now received the nine lives of a leader, and StarClan grants you the guardianship of ShadowClan. Defend it well; care for young and old; honor your ancestors and the traditions of the warrior code; live each life with pride and dignity."

Cats started calling out, "Firestar! Firestar!"

A sudden caterwauling filled the air. All the cats Firestar had received lives from spoke all at once, "Bad times are coming, Firestar. Stay strong and trust your allies." Firestar was terrified. What was going on? He immediately woke up in Mothermoth.

Runningnose seemed to wake up too, because suddenly began stirring. Runningnose jumped up and signaled Firestar to follow him. Firestar noticed the sky was turning a dark blue. He decided to follow the medicine cat out. Once out, Runningnose asked, "Did you receive a message from StarClan too?" Firestar nodded, too tired to speak.

Runningnose seemed to understand. "Let's go to Barley's Farm. He may spare us a few mice." Firestar nodded in agreement. He wanted to talk to Ravenpaw. He was ready to confront Tigerstar once and for all.

Chapter 29

The two ShadowClan cats found Barley's farm. Once inside, Firestar called, "Ravenpaw. Barley." Firestar turned to Runningnose and said, "You know Ravenpaw, right?" Runningnose nodded and said, "He was a ThunderClan apprentice before deciding to become a loner with Barley, right?"

Ravenpaw's black head popped out and said, "Fireheart. How are you? Did you help ShadowClan?" Runningnose stopped Ravenpaw and said, "He did more than help ShadowClan. He is Firestar now. Leader of ShadowClan." Ravenpaw looked shocked.

Barley poked his head out of the hay and said, "What is this about being leader?" Ravenpaw turned to Barley and said, "Fireheart is now leader of ShadowClan!" Barley looked surprised, but amused. "So why did you come?" the black and white loner asked. Runningnose spoke, "Just to rest and eat." Ravenpaw led the way a small area of the barn. Runningnose turned to Firestar and said, "I'll make you a nest."

Firestar nodded and turned to Ravenpaw. "Can I speak to you for a second?" Ravenpaw nodded. They made their way outside to make sure no cat heard. Once out of earshot, Firestar spoke, "at the next gathering, I am going to confront Tigerstar about all the crimes he had committed. I want you to come with me." Ravenpaw looked stunned. Firestar felt bad for asking him so harshly.

Firestar went to apologize. "Ravenpaw, I'm sor-" Ravenpaw interrupted Firestar and said, "I know. I just never thought it would come to this day." Firestar suddenly heard Runningnose call, "Firestar. Your nest is done. I don't want you to lose a life from a sickness." Firestar looked at Ravenpaw. "Go," the black tom said. Firestar went in the farm, suddenly feeling tired.He curled into the nest and quickly fell asleep.

Firestar woke sore. He never realized getting a leader's nine lives would be that lasting. Firestar then noticed a mouse in front of his

nest. The scent made Firestar hungry. He ate half of it before turning to Runningnose's nest. The medicine cat was asleep, though lightly.

Runningnose woke up at Firestar's persistent shoving. "Are you ready, Firestar?" the medicine cat asked. Firestar gave him the half eaten mouse. "You finish it. You need your strength." Runningnose said. Firestar knew Runningnose was stubborn. The leader responded, "You need your strength, too. And I am your leader. I say eat." Runningnose mumbled something under his breath before eating the mouse.

Once Runningnose finished, the two set off. The sun wasn't even high in the sky. Before cutting through WindClan territory, Firestar stopped and turned to the barn. Ravenpaw was on the roof of the barn. He gave Firestar a stern nod. Firestar knew Ravenpaw was going to help.

As the two found the WindClan thunderpath tunnel that leads to ShadowClan, an uncomfortable feeling rose in Firestar's belly. Something was terribly wrong. Firestar picked up the pace. "What's going on, Firestar?" Runningnose asked as he tried to keep up. Firestar didn't turn his head, but said, "I don't know. I just had a bad feeling." Runningnose seemed to understand. Firestar suddenly picked up a scent. He couldn't make it out, but he knew it wasn't good.

As the two got closer to camp, the scent was clear. It was ThunderClan raiding the camp. At that point, Firestar was at a full sprint, his unsheathed claws ready to defend his clan. He broke through the camp barrier, attacking the first ThunderClan scented cat he saw. It was Longtail. A bit of shock waved through the pale tabby's eyes, but quickly went away.

Longtail swiped at the new leader. Firestar was ready. He grabbed the long tailed warrior by the scruff of his neck and forcibly pinned him to the ground. This was enough for the warrior to hiss, "Retreat, ThunderClan. Retreat!" Some cats stopped fighting and ran towards the exit of the camp. ShadowClan cats started swiping at the intruders, making them run faster. A cat shoved Firestar to the side. Firestar wasn't surprised to Dustpelt. Russetfur swiped at the

ThunderClan warrior, chasing him off.

Firestar looked at the reddish warrior and asked, "what happened?" Russetfur shrugged her shoulders and said, "ThunderClan had come to scare us for territory. I heard an apprentice repeating pretty loudly, 'the more ShadowClan warriors down, the more territory.'" Firestar knew it was most likely Swiftpaw, since he was the one to accidentally tell other clan cats about housing Brokentail when he was alive.

"Send a few warriors out to make sure ThunderClan left our territory." Firestar commanded to Russetfur. "Already on it." Wetfoot said from behind Firestar. "Before you all go," Firestar said while jumping onto Clanrock, "I have a ceremony to perform. I am announcing the new deputy." Firestar could see Runningnose relax a bit.

"I say these words before Nightstar, Blackfoot, and Cinderfur that the spirits of our warrior ancestors may hear and approve of my choice. The new deputy of ShadowClan will be Russetfur!" No cat was surprised at Firestar's choice. Even Wetfoot, who was Firestar's second choice, didn't seem bothered. Russetfur turned to her clanmates and said, "I am truly honored to serve this clan and help lead to strengthen this clan. Now. Find any ThunderClan stragglers that may still be out there."

As Wetfoot led the searching patrol left, Firestar couldn't help but noticed two narrowed, blue eyes stare at him in the bushes. As the cat turned, a noticeably long tail followed him. Firestar knew it was Longtail. The leader wondered what Longtail was planning on doing with what he saw, but knew whatever it was, it wasn't good.

Chapter 30

The full moon rose over Firestar and his cats as they found themselves at the Gathering. RiverClan and WindClan had beaten ShadowClan to Fourtrees. Ravenpaw was spotted behind Graystripe and the rest of RiverClan, swiftly hidden behind the bushes. WindClan was not far behind ShadowClan. Firestar looked at all of his cats. Rowanpaw, the newest apprentice of ShadowClan sat next to his mentor, Jaggedtooth, in nervousness. Cedarfur and Oakfur, both new warriors stood proudly as they bragged to other apprentices of their new warrior statuses.

Firestar jumped onto Highrock with Crookedstar. Tallstar followed Firestar. "So," the black and white leader started saying, "ShadowClan leader?" Firestar nodded, wondering what was taking ThunderClan so long. "Congratulations, Firestar," Crookedstar stated. Firestar responded, "Thanks. I hope I lead ShadowClan as well as both of you." Crookedstar nodded and Tallstar murmured something under his breath.

Suddenly, ThunderClan burst through. Tigerstar jumped onto Highrock and started the Gathering with a yowl. Firestar was surprised on how rushed Tigerstar seemed. Tallstar seemed to notice too, because he asked the dark tabby, "Why so rushed, Tigerstar?" Tigerstar looked at Tallstar and said, "I have a special announcement for every cat to hear." Tallstar nodded and stepped back, letting Tigerstar step forward.

"Cats of all clans," Tigerstar announced, "I have a special proposition for all of you. Clan life is starting to become rough. We need food and shelter. I say we join clans as one, no threats of each other, just the elements. Every cat will be safe and out of harm." Every cat was stunned. Firestar looked at all the cats. He laid his eyes on Ravenpaw. The black tom looked at Firestar in utter shock.

"Now what do you say?" Tigerstar turned to the other leaders. Tallstar sneered, "We are four clans. Not one. Why do you think there are four trees surrounding the Gathering place? Clearly,

StarClan will be upset." Tigerstar looked at Crookedstar. The light tabby hissed at Tigerstar, "I agree with Tallstar. We are four not one. Who gives you the right to say such things?"

Firestar stayed quiet. He looked at all the gathered cats. Many sneered at Tigerstar's request. Some cats, though, seemed to want to follow Tigerstar. "So, Firestar," Tigerstar said almost mockingly, "you probably can't make such decisions, since you've never led before."

Firestar turned to Tigerstar and hissed, "How dare you mock my leadership, when we should be questioning yours." Tigerstar seemed lost for words. Many cats seemed confused. Firestar took this time and stepped forward. "Cats of all clans," Firestar said confidentiality, "you do not have to believe what I am telling you, but trust me, what I say is true." Some cats started to murmur.

"Many moons ago, the day I joined ThunderClan, Tigerstar, then Tigerclaw, Bluestar's former deputy Redtail, and Tigerstar's former apprentice Ravenpaw went by Sunningrocks. A RiverClan patrol seemed to attack, so Tigerstar sent Ravenpaw to get warriors. He did this purposely to get Redtail and him alone. Redtail fought Oakheart, accidentally falling into a rockslide. This killed Oakheart, but not Redtail. Tigerstar took this opportunity to corner Redtail. Ravenpaw watched Tigerstar kill Redtail and blame his death on Oakheart."

Cats seemed shocked. Dustpelt, who was in the ThunderClan gathering patrol, hissed, "How would Ravenpaw tell you all this if he's dead?" Firestar twitched his tail. Ravenpaw stepped into the clearing, shocking ThunderClan, Tigerstar most of all. Ravenpaw glared at Tigerstar before saying to the gathered cats, "Tigerstar is not a good cat. He killed Redtail to become deputy himself. He knew I saw him kill Redtail and tried to kill me by sending me to Snakerocks and ShadowClan territory. I was so scared for my life, Firestar and Graystripe sent me away for my safety, claiming my death. I am no traitor by any fault."

Ravenpaw turned to Firestar. The ShadowClan leader gave him permission to leave. Graystripe made sure to guard Ravenpaw on his way back to Barley's farm. Once the loner was out of sight,

Firestar continued, "Once Tigerstar became deputy, after Lionheart's death, he plotted to kill Bluestar. First, he tried to get her run over by a monster near the Thunderpath. However, Bluestar was too sick to leave her den. My former apprentice, Cinderpelt, decided to go instead. That is how she crippled her leg."

Cats roared in fury. Cinderpelt was well like amongst the clans, so this was a surprise. Firestar signaled his tail for silence before continuing, "Tigerstar tried again. He used Brokentail's rogues to attack our camp as a distraction so he can go for Bluestar himself. This time, he succeeded. Bluestar died under Tigerstar's claws and framed Brokentail as her murderer. Then, he told the rogues who ever could kill me will be his new deputy."

Nightwhisper, one of the former rogues in ShadowClan, spoke up, "What Firestar is saying is true. And if Tigerstar didn't kill Tangleburr, one of us would have at least tried." ShadowClan was now agitated. Now that they found out one of their old clanmates died under Tigerstar, they were mad. Firestar managed to calm his cats before saying, "after I heard that news, I left with my apprentice, my sister's kit, with Graystripe and his kits for our own safety."

By now, cats were hissing at Tigerstar. Tigerstar's followers began to defend the leader profusely. Tigerstar yowled for every cat's attention. "I don't care if you believe this poor excuse of a leader," Tigerstar said, "but my proposition still stands. Cats who want to join me shall be welcomed. Those who won't will parish. Choose wisely."

Crookedstar was the first to say, "Bo cat has any right to follow you. You don't deserve to lead a clan of your own. Now, stay off RiverClan territory or we will make you." Tigerstar laughed and said, "I have plenty of right to lead my clan, and the rest of yours. Watch you back, Crookedstar. Your clan will fall." Tigerstar signaled his tail for ThunderClan to follow. They did, though some were hesitant.

Firestar caught the eye of Sandstorm. She looked at Firestar in sorrow before following her clanmates. Firestar sighed. He knew any cat that he was friends with will be at huge risk. Firestar prayed

to StarClan that they will be safe.

Chapter 31

Firestar couldn't sleep after the Gathering. He worried of a brutal attack from Tigerstar. Firestar sighed and took this time to groom his pelt, which had become unkempt throughout the night. The sun broke through the camp as Firestar finished.

Firestar left his den as cats began to leave their dens. Once every cat waited for orders, Firestar sprang onto Clanrock. "Cats of ShadowClan," Firestar addressed, "you may have heard what Tigerstar had announced at the gathering. However, we will not join him and his scheme." Cats cheered. Firestar looked around at his cats. They were ready. Then his eyes landed on Jaggedtooth and Oakfur. They were muttering with each other, clearly not listening to Firestar.

Firestar felt frustrated, but put it aside. Firestar continued, "I want double patrols at the ThunderClan border. Russetfur will organize these patrols." Archeye and a few other elders purposely coughed to get Firestar's attention. "What is it, Archeye?" Firestar asked. Archeye spoke, "If you don't mind, Firestar, us elders would like to contribute. If everything is true about Tigerstar, we want to help. Whatever it takes."

Firestar was surprised but relieved. "Do you mind hunting?" Firestar asked, "I worry if you get hurt." Archeye turned to his fellow elders. Each nodded. "Ok Firestar." Archeye said, "Thank you." Firestar nodded and said, "No. Thank you. The clan needs prey." The elders stepped back.

Firestar cleared his throat and continued, "We also need to start battle training. We may have a large fight on our paws and we need to be prepared. Webfoot, will you set that up?" Russetfur nodded. Firestar concluded the meeting with a nod. As he jumped from Clanrock, Firestar saw Jaggedtooth quickly pace towards the exit. Firestar stopped the ginger tom and said, "Why in such a rush?"

"I was going hunting." Jaggedtooth shuddered. Firestar saw through

his lie. "Where is your apprentice?" Firestar asked. Jaggedtooth fell quiet. Russetfur fell next to Firestar and said, "I will bring Jaggedtooth and Rowanpaw with me on my patrol." Firestar agreed. Jaggedtooth didn't argue. Rowanpaw seemed excited.

When Russetfur's patrol left, Firestar noticed Oakfur trying to sneak out. Nightwhisper stopped him and asked what he was doing. Oakfur hissed at him before storming off to the warriors den. Firestar stepped next to Nightwhisper and said, "Oakfur has alway been hot tempered." Nightwhisper nodded, clearly upset. Firestar sighed and said, "I have to ask a favor from you. Keep an eye on Oakfur for me. I suspect he and Jaggedtooth are planning something."

Nightwhisper didn't seem startled. The brown tom looked at his paws and said, "I know they're planning something. Last night, I overheard Jaggedtooth and Oakfur talking about how they plan to cross the border for something and fell quiet when I asked what they were talking about." Firestar wasn't sure if he should be shocked.

Nightwhisper looked at Firestar and said in confidence, "If I see Jaggedtooth and Oakfur within earshot of each other, I will be sure to let you know." Firestar was proud of the former rogue. Nightwhisper had gotten use to clan life so well. As Nightwhisper started to leave, Firestar asked him, "Get Stubbytail to keep an eye on Jaggedtooth. And don't make yourselves noticeable." Nightwhisper nodded and stayed close to the warriors den. Firestar felt a bit comforted. He suddenly felt tired after not sleeping that night, so Firestar decided to take a nap.

Later that day, Firestar led a patrol to the ThunderClan border. He made sure to pass the training hollow. Firestar was happy to see Wetfoot and Applefur training one on one. As the patrol made their way, he saw something moving inside the Thunderpath tunnels. He gave Rowanberry, Cedarfur, and Tallpoppy a nod. The patrol crept forward. "Who's there?" Firestar called, "Show yourselves."

Speckletail stepped forward, as did Goldenflower. Both looked battered and tired. Even Rowanberry was shocked at the shape they were in. Firestar asked the two queens, "What happened?"

Speckletail was the first to speak, "This morning, Tigerstar came to the nursery. He called Tawnykit and Bramblekit, which they came to him. Tigerstar then called Snowkit, but since, Snowkit is deaf, he didn't go. Tigerstar immediately grabbed the kit and started hurting him. Goldenflower and I tried to stop hi, but it was too late." Speckletail shivered and said, "He killed my kit, Firestar. He killed Snowkit."

Rowanberry and Tallpoppy rested their heads on the old queen's shoulders. They understood the loss of kits. Firestar turned his attention to Goldenflower. She was looking at her paws. "Where's your kits?" he asked. Goldenflower sighed and said, "Tigerstar threatened me through them if I didn't stop swiping at him for killing Snowkit." Firestar understood. Goldenflower and Speckletail left for their own safety, but couldn't take Bramblekit and Tawnykit.

"Let's bring them back to camp." Firestar announced. His patrol nodded and brought the two queens to camp. Russetfur spotted the ThunderClan queens and tried to attack them. Firestar stopped her and pulled his deputy aside. "Are you crazy?" she hissed between her teeth, "They are ThunderClan cats. Are you still loyal to ThunderClan?" Firestar understood her concerns. "Tigerstar killed Speckletail's kit in front of her without warning. Speckletail and Goldenflower tried to stop him. Now they has nowhere to go."

Russetfur didn't look satisfied. Firestar sighed and said, "I'm loyal to ShadowClan, but I can't see a hurt cat without helping." Russetfur looked at Firestar and said, "I can't convince you, can I?" Firestar shook his head. Russetfur seemed to relax a bit. "I'll keep Rowanberry and Tallpoppy with the two. I don't care if their your former clanmates or queens. I still don't trust them." Firestar didn't stop her. He was just happy to have such a good deputy. He wouldn't know what he'll do if Tigerstar did something to her.

Chapter 32

A quarter moon passed since the gathering. There have been weak raid attempts from ThunderClan, but Firestar was wondering if Tigerstar was purposely sending weaker warriors to scare them. Firestar sent out dusk patrol, with Russetfur at the lead, with Jaggedtooth following behind. He also sent Stubbytail with them, since Rowanpaw picked up a stomach ache after eating an old frog.

Oakfur was sitting near the freshkill pile. Firestar tried to keep Jaggedtooth and Oakfur way from each other without making it too obvious, but on occasion, Nightwhisper and Stubbytail would overhear them talking about joining Tigerstar.

Firestar sighed and looked at Speckletail and Goldenflower. Speckletail seemed to be getting use to ShadowClan. The old queen was convinced by Archeye and Flintfang to stay in the elders den since she was getting pretty frail. Firestar allowed Goldenflower to stay in his nest while he slept in the warriors den. The current queen had a harder time getting use to ShadowClan, and the cats around her. Firestar assumed part of it was from worrying about her kits.

Firestar sighed. He couldn't imagine what she was going through. He grabbed a squirrel from the freshkill pile and walked over to Goldenflower. She was laying in the sun, looking dreadful. "Hey, Goldenflower." Firestar called. She looked up at Firestar, her eyes seemed unfocused. Firestar took the time to give her the squirrel. "Eat." Firestar said. She didn't seem to want to eat.

Firestar sighed again. It hurt him to see this once strong spirited she-cat like this. He sat next to Goldenflower and said, "I know I don't understand how you feel, but if you need someone to, I am here for you." Goldenflower's eyes lightened up a bit. "Thank you, Firestar." the queen said, "I'm just worried, that's all." Firestar nodded and said, "I am too. But there is no point in worrying. I know StarClan will protect us. Now eat. We are from separate clans, but I am a leader I don't want any cat to go hungry."

Goldenflower gave Firestar a purr before grabbing the squirrel and took a bite. Firestar was pleased and turned. He saw Speckletail padding over to Goldenflower and Firestar, holding a mouse in her jaw. She gave Firestar a nod and sat next to Goldenflower. Firestar walked away from the ThunderClan queens and padded over to the freshkill pile. The elders were all talking around it, talking about the cold weather.

Firestar took a finch and sat near the warriors den. Once he was finished, Firestar noticed Wetfoot was pacing. "Are you ok?" Firestar asked. The gray warrior said, "I have a really bad feeling." Firestar perked and asked, "when did it start?" Wetfoot shrugged and said "When Russetfur's patrol left. I have a feeling something bad is going to happen to them." Firestar took this seriously. "Ok, Wetfoot," Firestar said, "get Boulder, Rowanberry, and Applefur. If your feeling is wrong, we can just join their patrol."

Wetfoot nodded and found the cats. Firestar briefed them and led the patrol towards the border. As they got close, the scent of blood and the sound of fighting filled the air. Firestar turned to Wetfoot, who seemed bewildered. Firestar immediately sprang forward, with his cats following.

Firestar was shocked at what he saw. Stubbytail was pinned by Swiftpaw and Brightpaw, two ThunderClan apprentices. Stubbytail was yowling for his life. In the Thunderpath tunnel, Jaggedtooth and Longtail were fighting with Russetfur. Firestar was even more shocked when Jaggedtooth tried to give the ShadowClan deputy the deathblow.

Firestar immediately hissed and threw himself at the traitor, pinning the ginger tom. Longtail threw himself at Firestar and fought profusely. While fighting, Longtail hissed at Jaggedtooth, "You said there weren't going to be any patrols out." Jaggedtooth defended himself and said, "there wasn't." Firestar turned to Russetfur. She was very injured and didn't move, other then her breathing. Firestar knew she couldn't help him for what was coming. Longtail signaled his tail and an ambush, consisting of Dustpelt, Ashpaw, Runningwind, and Sandstorm rushed the battle.

Firestar swung at Longtail and hissed, "Was Tigerstar too scared to

lead this patrol?" Longtail hissed and fought back hard. Jaggedtooth didn't help Longtail. Instead, he was dragging Russetfur to ThunderClan territory. Firestar tried to help his deputy, but was pinned by Longtail and Dustpelt. As Firestar was being crushed by his former clanmates, he heard Sandstorm hiss at Jaggedtooth, "what are you doing to Russetfur? Why are you bringing her to ThunderClan?"

Jaggedtooth responded with a hiss, "Tigerstar's orders. Now help me." Firestar could just see the dismay in her eyes as he helped Jaggedtooth. By now, Firestar was filled with rage. He swiped at Dustpelt's legs, knocking him over. Firestar then used his back legs to flip Longtail. Before Dustpelt could take a swipe at Firestar, Applefur knocked Dustpelt over.

Firestar looked to his cats. Swiftpaw and Brightpaw were running from Wetfoot as Stubbytail pinned Ashpaw. Longtail seemed to realize ThunderClan was losing, because he called, "ThunderClan. Retreat." Longtail turned and ran for ThunderClan territory. Dustpelt followed, saying, "Swiftclaw, Brightheart, Ashpaw, come on." The rest of the patrol ran for ThunderClan territory. Firestar followed them, determined to find Russetfur.

He followed her scent, but over time, the smell of fern and wet soot filled his nose. Firestar had no choice but to turn back. Now, though, he was angry. Jaggedtooth betrayed ShadowClan, and Oakfur probably knew.

Chapter 33

Firestar barged into the ShadowClan camp, feeling betrayed. Cats immediately stared in confusion. "Where's Russetfur?" Nightwhisper asked. Firestar looked around at his cats and furiously said, "Jaggedtooth betrayed ShadowClan. He planned with ThunderClan to attack Russetfur and Stubbytail. Jaggedtooth took Russetfur into harm's way, injuring her, and let ThunderClan take himself and our deputy."

Cats hissed in furry, madder than Firestar himself. Oakfur suddenly came into view and asked, "Jaggedtooth did what to Russetfur?" Firestar immediately pinned the young warrior down. Oakfur was confused and tried to push Firestar off. Nightwhisper came over and helped Firestar. Firestar then asked the young warrior, "Were you planning on joining Tigerstar?"

Oakfur suddenly stopped struggling. Firestar asked another question, "were you and Jaggedtooth going to join Tigerstar's cause?" Oakfur was shaking as he said, "yes." Cats gasped. Oakfur started defending himself, saying, "Jaggedtooth and I were planning on joining Tigerstar, but he told me nothing about taking Russetfur!" Firestar hissed back, "What do you know?"

Oakfur began describing what Jaggedtooth told him, "He told me Tigerstar was right, that all clans should unite because leafbare is hard. He wanted to cause chaos in ShadowClan, but I knew nothing of Russetfur's kidnapping. I swear by StarClan. I swear!" Firestar and Nightwhisper let go. Oakfur was crouched low in fear. ShadowClan was murmuring on the situation.

Firestar quickly jumped onto Clanrock and said, "ShadowClan. Jaggedtooth has betrayed us and taken Russetfur to ThunderClan. First, we need to discuss Oakfur." Oakfur shook in fear as he went to Clanrock. "I say," Wetfoot said, "keep him in the clan, but do apprentice duties. Hunting far from the Thunderpath and collecting moss. We need every cat to do something." The warriors seemed to agree.

Firestar nodded and said, "Oakfur will now do apprentice duties, but one wrong move and I will personally escort out of ShadowClan territory. I will assign Cedarfur and Boulder to keep an eye on Oakfur. This brings me to my next point. Rowanpaw needs a new mentor." The apprentice nodded. "Rowanpaw, with Jaggedtooth gone, I will assign you a new mentor. I say these words under StarClan. Nightwhisper will be Rowanpaw's new mentor."

Cats called out to Nightwhisper. "Nightwhisper," Firestar spoke, "you have shown strong loyalty to ShadowClan. Pass it on wisely." Nightwhisper touched noses with his new apprentice and sat down. Boulder suddenly called out, "what about a new deputy?" Firestar nodded at his concern. "Wetfoot will take on deputy duties until we get Russetfur back." ShadowClan seemed to agree. Wetfoot stepped forward and said, "I am honored. I may only be temporary, but for Russetfur's sake, I will not disappoint you."

Firestar nodded. Wetfoot stepped back as Firestar stated, "Let us set up a patrol towards the ThunderClan border. Let us-" Shadepelt of RiverClan suddenly burst through the entrance. "Tigerstar is attacking RiverClan." the black pelted warrior said in fright, "Some of our warriors are fighting with him." Firestar turned to Wetfoot. The gray warrior immediately set up a patrol. Applefur, Tallpoppy, Cinderfur, Rowanberry, and Runningnose with herbs were called upon.

Firestar spoke to Wetfoot, "I will lead them. If Tigerstar decides to attack ShadowClan, meet me at Fourtrees." Wetfoot nodded and called for a border and hunting patrol. Firestar quickly led his patrol to Fourtrees, with Shadepelt showing the way. As they found their way to Fourtrees, the sound of fighting grew louder. "ShadowClan, attack!" Firestar yowled. The sound and sight of ShadowClan seemed to scare cats away. Cinderfur was about attack Leopardfur, when Shadepelt stopped him.

Firestar went to face the RiverClan deputy. "Who of your clan betrayed you? Where is Crookedstar?" Firestar asked. Leopardfur nodded her head, saying, "Crookedstar's dead. He died fighting Tigerstar." Leopardfur was weak from her wounds. Stonefur let her lean on him. Firestar looked around at the remaining RiverClan cats. Stonefur was with Leopardfur, Mistyfoot was with Shadepelt

and Graystripe's kits. Mosspelt was also there, talking with Graypool.

In the far side of the clearing, Mudfur was looming over a blood soaked gray cat. Firestar's stomach dropped as Runningnose ran passed him, the scent of healing herbs flooding Firestar's nose. The cat on the ground was Graystripe. The ginger tom quickly ran to his friend's side. Graystripe was breathing and tried to get up. The gray tom fell to the ground as quickly as he got up. Mudfur took this opportunity to put herbs and cobwebs on him.

"Are you ok, Graystripe? You look pretty bad." Firestar said. Graystripe looked at Firestar and joke, "you should have the cat I was fighting." Graystripe winced in pain. Firestar looked at Runningnose. The ShadowClan medicine cat looked at Mudfur in trust. "I'll leave you all to it." Firestar said as he walked away.

Rustling of grass and heather coming from WindClan territory made Firestar worry. Was this another attack? Firestar was about to brace himself when Onewhisker and Tallstar showed themselves, as well as a fighting patrol. "Where is ThunderClan?" Firestar heard Mudclaw hiss. Firestar sighed and said, "They're gone. They took RiverClan territory with them."

Tallstar seemed almost shocked. "So this is what's left of RiverClan?" Onewhisker asked as he laid his eyes from one RiverClan cat to another. Leopardfur came over and said, defeatedly, "Crookedstar's dead and the other RiverClan cats were either killed or followed Tigerstar willingly. I am the leader of nothing now."

"That's not true." Stonefur interrupted her, "you have to lead the rest of us now." Leopardfur looked stumped for a heartbeat. Tallstar came forward and said, "The river crosses through our territory. With this little of your clan with you, we'll give you a small corner of the river to access." Leopardfur looked stunned as she said, "We can't do this to you."

Deadfoot stepped forward and said, "We insist. You have nowhere to go. We are in hard times, with ThunderClan causing trouble."

"As long as you stay where you're supposed to." Firestar heard

Mudclaw hiss. Leopardfur nodded and said, "Thank you, Tallstar." She turned to Firestar, "For your help, if there will be a fight, despite how small we are currently, we will fight against Tigerstar."

"As will we." Tallstar said. Every cat yowled in agreement. Firestar was stunned, but thanked all of them. Now Firestar understood how Tigerstar was not just his problem, but all of theirs, too. Tallstar turned to his territory. Leopardfur followed. Firestar couldn't help but feel nervous as he thought that it was not if, but when a fight will happen.

Chapter 34

Firestar patrolled alone during the night. The full moon was just days away and he worried for an ambush during the Gathering, if there is a Gathering. A shiver shook through the leader. He couldn't think like that. He looked across the Thunderpath into ThunderClan territory. What will happen to them?

His stomach turned as passed Fourtrees. Firestar couldn't look at it. He looked forward to WindClan territory. Firestar remembered passing Leopardfur and her cats a few time on a day patrol. Firestar pitied her. He knew Leopardfur refused to get her nine lives until she gets her clan back, which will be a hard to do.

As he passed Fourtrees, low whispers could be heard. The whispers grew louder as he got closer. They seem to be warning Firestar of something. Firestar stopped, being very suspicious. A cat slowly crept forward. Firestar threw himself onto the mysterious cat. This cat had poor fighting skills, because Firestar pinned him easily. "Get off, Fireheart." the cat said. Firestar stepped back. This cat's white pelt gleamed in the moonlight. The cat's twoleg collar jingled as he stood up. "Cloudtail?" Firestar asked. He was bigger than when Firestar last saw him. Plump too.

"Cloud now." Cloudtail said, "What's this about being ShadowClan leader?" Firestar sighed and said, "I am ShadowClan's new leader. Why do you ask?" Cloud sat down and said, "I met Whitestorm at the border. He told me all about you in ShadowClan and all the latest news."

Firestar felt annoyed. "You didn't just come here to see if I were clan leader." Firestar asked. Cloud shook his head. "Tigerstar has been sending cats to recruit kittypets and rogues for a battle. Just wanted to give you a heads up." Firestar looked at his former apprentice and asked, "How do you know?"

"Oh, Smudge told me he spotted a black and white tom, a brown tom, and a white and ginger she-cat asking a rogue about joining

ThunderClan." Cloud said, "I only assume the cats he saw was Swiftclaw, Dustpelt, and Brightheart."

"So why did you come here at night? What about your mother?" Firestar asked. Cloud scratched his ear as he said, "I occasionally come out at night, so my twolegs know I'll come back eventually. Princess is fine. She worries about you though. Come and visit whenever this thing blows over."

Cloud stood up and stretched. "Thank you so much, Cloud." Firestar said, "If I can ask for one favor, can you tell the cats around the border not to trust any cat who tells them to join ThunderClan?" Cloud nodded and said, "I've been doing that. Every kittypet believes me because I was a forest cat once. The rogues and loners are harder to convince."

"Thank you anyways." Firestar said. As Cloud turned to leave, Firestar asked, "Is any cat with you? I heard other cats whisper in your direction." Cloud shook his head. "You must be hearing thing." Cloud said stubbornly. The white tom went to ThunderClan territory in the direction of twolegplace. Firestar sighed. He was alone once more.

Firestar finished his patrol and got back to ShadowClan camp as the sun rose. Cats began to stir. Wetfoot came up to Firestar and asked, "Any ThunderClan scents." Firestar nodded and told his deputy, "I saw my kittypet nephew though. He warned me that Tigerstar is trying to recruit cats from twolegplace." As Firestar mentioned cats from twolegplace, Boulder came by and asked nervously, "What sort of cats?"

Firestar shrugged, "He wasn't specific. Cloud only mentioned cats near his twolegs. Why? Are there worse cats out there?" Boulder only nodded. "Where?" Firestar asked. Boulder spoke in a panic, "You don't understand, Firestar. They aren't good cats. They kill each other for fun and use their victims as trophies. They uses deathblows. If Scourge gets enlisted by Tigerstar, we have no chance of winning."

Firestar trusted Boulder. With a leader named Scourge, these cats must be scary. "We need to find those cats of yours." Firestar said,

"If they are as bad as you say, we must tell Scourge not to trust any news from ThunderClan." Boulder nodded. Wetfoot was sitting silently. Firestar looked at him and said, "I'll only be gone for maybe a day. Send out patrols."

"I'll talk to a few of the rogues and loners at the end of the fence line. I have a few friends there." Nightwhisper chimed in. Wetfoot nodded and said, "I'll take your apprentice for the day." Nightwhisper nodded in thanks. Firestar gave Boulder a nod and let him lead the way. For all Firestar knew, he was going into hostile territory.

Chapter 35

Boulder and Firestar weaved through alleyways in the twolegplace. Firestar was slightly fatigued from doing the night patrol, but he knew this was too important. Boulder stopped. Firestar followed. He trusted Boulder, so he followed his body movements. Firestar didn't want any of them to get killed.

The scent of a few cats made Firestar nervous. Then, a large black and white, battle scarred tom, followed by a few other cats. Firestar stared in shock as he realized what Boulder meant by trophies. They had collars that were stubbed with cats' teeth and claws. "Hello, Bone." Boulder said to the black and white tom. The black and white tom sneered, "I can't believe you came back, Boulder. Did the forest life not suit you?"

"We came with a message for Scourge." Boulder said calmly. Bone looked at Firestar. Firestar knew not to size the tom up, but rather raise his head slightly. Bone twitched his whiskers and said, "You better have a good message for him."

Bone led the cats through a few alleyways. Boulder whispered in Firestar's ear, "Scourge is surprisingly powerful for his size. Don't intimidate him." Firestar nodded. He turned to his warrior and said, "I am going to do something crazy. Just a heads up." Boulder didn't have any time to respond, because Bone stopped. "Scourge. You have visitors." Bone called to a small, black tom. Firestar couldn't help but notice Scourge's claws and collar. They were stubbed with dog teeth.

Scourge sat on top of a large twoleg carrion bin. Firestar stepped forward and introduced himself, saying, "I am Firestar, leader of ShadowClan. My warrior mentioned your cats. I came here to ask if you heard anything from a clan called ThunderClan." Scourge didn't seem surprised. "I heard a few of my cats discussing it." A gleam in the rogue leader's cold blue eyes scared Firestar.

"You seem awfully scared if my cats join ThunderClan." Scourge

said coldly, "What will you give me if I refuse to join them?" Firestar looked at Boulder then back at Scourge. "I'll give one of your cats a fair fight. If I win, you cannot and will not join ThunderClan in their cause." Scourge perked in interest as he asked Firestar, "and if you lose?" Firestar thought cleverly. "You will have the body of a forest clan leader and have the freedom to choose to join ThunderClan." Firestar responded. Scourge was more than happy to agree to Firestar's terms.

Rogues made a circle around the alley. Firestar sat next to Boulder. "Are you crazy?" Boulder said. Firestar wasn't surprised Boulder would call him crazy. "They would have to kill me nine times to beat me. StarClan will protect me." Firestar responded. Boulder said nothing more.

Firestar sighed and stepped into the ring of cats. As he did, Firestar saw Bone step into the ring. Firestar felt his stomach turn as he realized what he had done. He would have to kill this cat to win. Firestar and Bone circled each other for a few heartbeats. Bone then lunged at Firestar. Firestar saw it coming and dodged it, barely missing him. Firestar jumped onto the big tom, sinking his claws and teeth into him. Bone rolled onto his back, almost crushing Firestar. Firestar let go and jumped back. Bone immediately threw himself at Firestar, hitting a blow on his shoulder. This blow was painful. This was far worse than Firestar thought it would be.

Firestar and Bone fought each other hard. Firestar didn't know rogues could fight so hard. What made the situation worse was Firestar being fatigued from doing a night patrol. Bone seemed to see Firestar slowing down, because the rogue fought harder. Firestar tried to keep up, but it was no use. Bone tripped Firestar and knocked him to the ground. Firestar struggled to get away from Bone as the rogue prepared the deathblow. Firestar prayed to StarClan one last time as Bone landed the blow.

Firestar closed his eyes, then opened them. He was at Fourtrees. Bluestar was there, sitting in front of him. "So I'm dead." Firestar said. Bluestar shook her head and replied, "No. Just your first life." Firestar sat for a few heartbeats, waiting to go back. "Was that life a waist?" Firestar asked. Bluestar shook her head, responding, "You wanted to prevent something that would have been catastrophic for

many clan cats. So no, it wasn't a waist, Firestar. Every life is not a waist." Firestar felt slightly relieved. He suddenly felt like he was being brought back. "Good luck, Firestar. StarClan is watching you." Firestar heard Bluestar say before waking up.

Firestar tried to keep his eyes closed. He wanted Bone, who still had him pinned, to be surprised. As Firestar came to his senses, he felt Bone yowl in triumph and release his grip. Firestar then used his back legs to throw the rogue to the ground and pinned him. Firestar held the rogue's neck to subdue, but not to kill. As he looked around to rogues, Firestar was surprised to see fear. Then it dawned on him. Scourge may be leader of the rogues, but Bone was the most feared. Scourge only stayed leader because Bone was at his command.

Firestar heard Boulder step next to him and told Scourge, "We promise you this. If you stay out of the forest, we will stay out of your alleys." Scourge hissed, "I will do you better." The black tom looked at all of his cats as he hissed, "If any of you see or scent any forest cats, kill them. If I even hear cats talking about them, I will kill you personally. If I ever see you, Boulder, or your leader, I will kill you, how many times it takes."

Firestar let go of Bone and spoke to Scourge, "And to you, Scourge. Stay out of the forest. That is my request." Scourge agreed. Firestar felt pride. He had avoided a potential threat. "Now," Scourge said coldly, "get out of my territory." Firestar nodded in respect before following Boulder home. He was ready, too.

Chapter 36

Firestar and Boulder silently went through the twolegplace. Firestar's paws were heavy, but went on. He suddenly looked up and recognized one of his old haunts when he was a kittypet. A brown and white tabby she-cat looked scared and alone. "Princess?" Firestar called. The tabby looked up and her eyes filled with joy. "Fireheart. Oh, my brother. You look awful." Princess said as she padded up.

"Why are you here? Why are you not at your twolegs? These alleys are dangerous and filled with nasty cats." Firestar said in concerned. Princess looked at her paws. "Cloud went out last night without telling me. I went to go find him. I got lost. I tried to be brave like you." Firestar touched her nose and said, "I saw Cloud. I sent him home. There is no need to worry about him. I trained him myself. You never need to worry about him. He's probably home right now."

Princess nodded. Firestar looked at Boulder. "You know how to get home from here." the gray tom said before heading for ShadowClan. Firestar turned ro Princess and brought her to his former home. As they jumped onto the fence, Firestar saw Cloud frantically looking for Princess. Cloud quickly ran to Princess when she was spotted. "I'm so sorry for leaving you, Princess. I had to talk to Firestar about something from ThunderClan."

"It's fine, my kit. I'm just glad you're safe." Princess said. Firestar stepped in and said, "for both of your safety, Cloud tell her when you leave." Cloud nodded and brought Princess home before coming back to Firestar and said, "You look awful. What happened?" Firestar sighed and said, "I mentioned what you told me to my clan. One of my cats mentioned a group of rogues in the twolegplace that were really dangerous. I went to talk to them."

Cloud nodded and said, "I'll try and keep some kittypets from going into the alleys and forest." Firestar nodded in thanks before leaving to ShadowClan. As he got to his camp, exhaustion hit him hard.

Goldenflower led him to the leader's den. He immediately curled into his nest and fell asleep.

Firestar woke up with scent of a thrush in front of him and herbs on his wounds. Boulder must have told Runningnose about his lost life, because Runningnose came in and checked his neck. "I'm fine." Firestar said. Runningnose still checked. Firestar knew he only worried. Firestar sighed as Runningnose finished. "I hope it was worth it, Firestar." Runningnose said. Firestar nodded. Runningnose sighed. Firestar looked at the medicine cat and said, "I only wanted to make sure our clan was safe from outside cats."

Runningnose sighed and said, "I know. Just don't do something stupid like that again." Firestar nodded and grabbed the thrush. With a bit of worry, Firestar watched as Runningnose walked out. Firestar wanted the medicine cat to not worry so much. Firestar finished his thrush and came out of his den. Wetfoot was setting up morning patrols. Goldenflower was talking to a few cats before following Applefur and her patrol. Speckletail was telling stories to Rowanpaw as he looked for ticks.

Firestar yawned and walked over to Wetfoot. "So, you let Goldenflower go on a patrol?" Firestar asked. Wetfoot nodded and said, "She's been wanting to go on a border on ThunderClan's border. I think she's still worried about her kits." Firestar nodded in understatement. "Have you decided to go to the Gathering?" Wetfoot asked.

"We are going." Firestar said, "Being in war doesn't mean we can't go to the Gathering." Wetfoot nodded and said, "I'll lead a border patrol along WindClan to tell them." Firestar nodded in thanks. When Wetfoot left, Firestar sat, not knowing what to do. Applefur and her patrol suddenly burst through the camp. "Tigerstar sent a message through Dustpelt." Applefur said, "He wants to make an announcement the morning of the Gathering concerning every clan."

Firestar turned to Rowanpaw and told him, "Find Wetfoot's patrol. Tell him this before he finds WindClan." The apprentice quickly followed his orders and ran as fast as he can. As the apprentice left, five cats came through the entrance. It was Brackenfur with his

apprentice, Fernpaw, Whitestorm, Sandstorm, and Russetfur. Goldenflower ran to her clanmates.

"Hello, Firestar." Whitestorm said, "We have come to help." Firestar was enthusiastic. "How did you get here without getting caught?" the ShadowClan leader asked. Whitestorm laughed and said, "Tigerstar went to stay in RiverClan with some of the warriors. It was almost to easy."

"You must have run into Dustpelt's patrol." Applefur said. Brackenfur shook his head and said, "We went through the twolegplace. Cloudpaw told us not to go deep within the twolegplace and showed us how to get here." As Brackenfur explained how they got there, Littlecloud gave Russetfur a checkup. "I'm fine," Russetfur said, "Just tired." Firestar knew she was being stubborn, so he said, "Take her to get rest."

Littlecloud nodded and brought the deputy to the warriors den. Runningnose was waiting for her. Firestar turned his attention back to his ThunderClan allys. He noticed Fernpaw was acting very awkward. "Are you ok, Fernpaw?" Firestar asked kindly. Fernpaw shook her head and said, "things have changed. I just want ThunderClan to be safe." Firestar understood.

He looked at Whitestorm and said, "Tigerstar might be planning an attack. Would you like to join us?" Whitestorm looked at his group. They all nodded. "We will join you for the battle." Whitestorm said. Firestar felt a bit of relief. Whitestorm was a great cat. Firestar prayed to StarClan that he lived through the battle.

Chapter 37

Firestar led ShadowClan, with the ThunderClan stragglers, to fourtrees. The morning sun shone onto Firestar's pelt, making it look like it's fire. Firestar looked at his cats. Wetfoot stood proudly, like all of LionClan. Russetfur, Firestar's deputy, despite what she went through, still wanted to fight. Rowanpaw was keeping pace with his mentor, Nightwhisper, who was now a very confident warrior. Many more ShadowClan cats were ready to fight for the clans.

Firestar looked at his ThunderClan allys. Whitestorm, the coolhead warrior and Firestar's closest ThunderClan ally, had fire in his eyes. Brackenfur, Firestar's unofficial apprentice, was encouraging Fernpaw to not attack her clan, but to attack Tigerstar's RiverClan followers. Sandstorm, Firestar's first critic, flexed her claws as she walked. Speckletail and Goldenflower, queens who wanted revenge on a death of a kit.

Firestar was ready to face his longest enemy. As they got to fourtrees, WindClan and Leopardfur's stragglers were in sight. "Are you ready, Firestar?" Tallstar asked. Firestar nodded, very determined. "Are you ready to get your clan back?" Firestar asked Leopardfur. Leopardfur sneered, "I am very ready. I will not let my warriors get away with this."

Firestar looked at her cats. Graystripe was quickly spotted with his kits, who were now apprentices. Mistyfoot and Stonefur were ready to fight. Firestar sighed and said a silent prayer to StarClan before leading into fourtrees. Tigerstar was waiting with both clans under him.

"So," the dark tabby said, "are you ready to join me?" Firestar hissed, "You really think I would join you? A kit murderer. A power hungry cat who killed his leader. No. I am not joining you."

"Neither am I." Tallstar hissed. Leopardfur agreed. Tigerstar twitched his nose as he said, "you will regret that. TigerClan,

attack." Firestar signaled his tail. His cats sprang forward, as did WindClan and Leopardfur's cats. Firestar threw himself at Tigerstar. Tigerstar clawed at the ginger tom. *This was it.* Firestar thought. *This was the final battle.*

Firestar and Tigerstar clawed at each other furiously, each getting hard blows on the other. In the corner of his eye, Firestar saw Jaggedtooth fighting Nightwhisper. Rowanpaw came to Nightwhisper's aid. Mistyfoot was clawing at Mousefur as Stonefur bit Longtail. Whitestorm was fighting with a RiverClan tom. Fernpaw was fighting a black RiverClan apprentice. Firestar couldn't see Brackenfur, but hoped he was ok.

Firestar continued fighting Tigerstar in fury. Tigerstar hit Firestar's leg, knocking him over. Tigerstar then pinned him to Greatrock. "You took away Bluestar," Firestar told the tabby, "you took away my clan, and now you are going to take my life. All that for power and hatred for me. Go ahead. I have nothing to lose."

Tigerstar was shocked for a second. This was all the time Firestar needed to tackle Tigerstar. Their fighting continued, ferocious as ever. Firestar was right on one thing, he had nothing to lose. His clan has a strong cat in Russetfur. He never took a mate or no kin of his own.

They fought all the way to sunhigh with no sign of stopping. Thick clouds covered the sky, darkening the sky. Thunder and lightning crackled in the air as rain poured down. Firestar and Tigerstar were battered, but continued the fight. As the darkened to night, Tigerstar had Firestar pinned. "Are you ready to join StarClan, Firestar?" Tigerstar said. Firestar struggled under the tabby's weight.

Barking could be heard between thunder rolling. Firestar closed his eye as Tigerstar raised his paw to deal a death blow. Suddenly, Firestar heard a cat hiss, "Dogs!" Firestar opened his eyes as lightning struck the night sky. Several large black and brown dogs ran into the clearing. Cats scattered or climbed a tree as the dogs bit at them. One of them lunged at Tigerstar. Firestar took this opportunity to run for a tree.

Firestar grabbed onto a tree and climbed for his life. A dog tried to

get to him, but Firestar got up in time. The rain slowly stopped as Firestar heard Tigerstar hissing and fighting the dogs. The sound of the ThunderClan leader stopping then hissing again showed that Tigerstar was losing lives. After what felt like moons, Tigerstar stopped. The ThunderClan leader was dead. The dogs howled as twolegs on small monster drove into the clearing. They put something around the dogs and dragged them away.

The clouds parted to show the full moon. Tigerstar's body laid still, broken and bloody. Firestar felt a taing of pity for the leader. Tigerstar would have been a great leader if pride hadn't gotten to him. Every cat was quiet as Firestar, Tallstar, and Leopardfur jumped onto Greatrock. Longtail stared at Tigerstar's body in shock before looking up at the leaders.

The long tailed tabby tom tried to go to Greatrock, but lightning struck the ground in front of it. "It's a sign from StarClan." Cinderpelt, who was treating cats of their injuries, "Longtail was judged. He can not be leader."

"Then who will?" a cat called. White smoke came out from where the lightning struck. Cinderpelt was shaking violently, then stopped. "StarClan gave me a vision." the she-cat said, "Whitestorm will be the new leader of ThunderClan."

Chapter 38

Firestar entered ThunderClan camp. He heard from a passing ThunderClan patrol that Jaggedtooth was caught hunting in their territory. Whitestar sat on top of the leader's den. He perked when Firestar was in view. "I assume have come for your warrior." Whitestar said. Firestar nodded. Whitestar had been a great leader, with Tigerstar's rain ending three moons prior.

Firestar sighed, thinking of all the cats that have died. Dustpelt and Brindleface of ThunderClan, Deadfoot and Morningflower of WindClan, Shadepelt and Mistyfoot of RiverClan, and Applefur and Wetfoot of ShadowClan.

Firestar looked around. Brightheart sat outside the medicine den. The young warrior decided to become a medicine cat to make it up to StarClan for following Tigerstar blindly. Longtail stayed a warrior. Whitestar let him stay a warrior out of pity. Longtail tries to show his loyalty to ThunderClan as often as possible. Not much could be said for Swiftclaw. Swiftclaw was exiled after attacking Whitestar the night he was announced leader. Whitestar made Brackenfur his deputy. Ashpaw received a new mentor after Dustpelt's death. He was given to Whitestar himself. Yellowfang decided to become an elder, but ultimately died of old age a quarter moon later. Both ThunderClan and ShadowClan miss her dearly.

Sandstorm decided to stay in ShadowClan with Firestar, along with Bramblepaw, which Firestar decided to mentor of, with much persistence from Goldenflower. Goldenflower allowed her son to go to ShadowClan because Bramblepaw looked a lot like his father and feared for assumptions. Since Tigerstar had very little quarrel with Tigerstar until recently, Bramblepaw felt more confortable. Both Sandstorm and Bramblepaw were fully excepted into ShadowClan.

Firestar remembered Leopardstar had a hard time reorganizing RiverClan after the battle. She pulled through, with her deputy, Stonefur. When Stonefur was announced as the RiverClan deputy, Firestar couldn't help but wonder how much pride Bluestar felt in

StarClan. Graystripe was asked to stay in RiverClan by Leopardstar after the battle, which he said yes.

Tallstar was upset that his deputy had died in the battle, but made Ashfoot as his new deputy. She was a good choice. She was headstrong but compassionate toward others. Gorsepaw was made a warrior, named Gorsestripe. Ravenpaw and Barley apologized for not helping in the battle, but made it up by allowing Oakfur, who was still fighting on Tigerstar's side, to guard the chicken coop due to rogues constantly trying to get into there.

Firestar looked around ThunderClan camp. Jaggedtooth was surrounded by Runningwind, Brackenfur, Longtail, and Goldenflower. They were going to bring him to the border where Firestar had his own patrol waiting for Jaggedtooth's arrival When Jaggedtooth saw Firestar, he looked at his leader in fear. "Come on Jaggedtooth," Firestar said, "ShadowClan is waiting."

The cats brought Jaggedtooth to the ShadowClan border where Russetfur, Nightwhisper, and Cedarfur were waiting. "Thank you." Firestar said to the ThunderClan warriors. They turned away as Firestar shoved Jaggedtooth towards ShadowClan. The patrol stopped in a clearing. "Aren't we going to the camp?" Jaggedtooth asked, trying not to sound scared.

Firestar twitched his tail. Russetfur struck a blow on the traitor's head. Nightwhisper struck a blow on Jaggedtooth's shoulder. Cedarfur aimed for his back legs. In a matter of moments, Jaggedtooth was on the floor, deep and scarring injuries covering him. "If we so hear that you or on any clan territory, we will do much worse," Firestar hissed, "Now leave our territory and never come back, Snag."

Snag got up and ran for the twolegplace, where Firestar couldn't help but wonder if the group of rogues in there would deal with him. Firestar watched the ginger tom get out of sight before walking with his parol home. When they entered, Sandstorm ran up to Firestar and touched noses with him. "I have something to tell you." she whispered. Firestar and Sandstorm went outside the camp. As they got out of earshot, Sandstorm immediately said, "I'm expecting kits. You're becoming a father."

Scared excitement filled Firestar. "Really?" Firestar asked. Sandstorm nodded. She was just as nervous and excited as Firestar. Firestar ran around in happiness before running into camp and announcing the news. Firestar will finally have kin in a clan. As he announced what Sandstorm told him, Runningnose, who is now an elder, said, "I've never seen a tom so happy about having kits."

Littlecloud came out of the medicine den and said to Sandstorm as she came into camp, "I advise you to do minimal hunting. I don't want you to have complications." Sandstorm nodded. Cats came up to her in congratulations.

Many moons later, Firestar's apprentice, Bramblepaw, becomes Brambleclaw. Sandstorm has her kits, named Squirrelkit and Leafkit. Squirrekit becomes Squirrelflight. Leafkit becomes medicine cat named Leafheart. The clans do eventually find the lake.

How do I know if that would happen if things were different? That is a good question, Mosskit. I have seen what has happened and will happen in the future, no matter the outcome. No, Adderkit. I cannot tell you the story if you lived. Maybe another time, Blossomkit. Now I recommend going back to StarClan, kits. I, Rock, live a solitary life, but I could use some company from time to time. Now go back to StarClan before more cats worry about you. Good luck on your travels.